

Costilla County Comprehensive Plan

Adopted September 14, 1999

BEFORE THE PLANNING COMMISSION
COSTILLA COUNTY
RESOLUTION NUMBER 99-_____

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING COSTILLA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

WHEREAS, Costilla County, Colorado, acting through its Planning Commission is empowered pursuant to Sections 30-28-106 through 30-28-109, C.R.S. to make and adopt a Comprehensive Plan, and

WHEREAS, the Costilla County Comprehensive Plan has been prepared for the unincorporated area of the County, and

WHEREAS, the Costilla County Comprehensive Plan complies with the requirements of Section 30-2-106 and 30-28-107, C.R.S., and

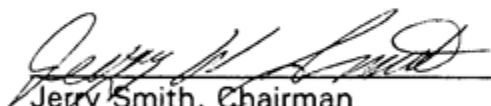
WHEREAS, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on the Costilla County Comprehensive Plan on August 31, 1999, and

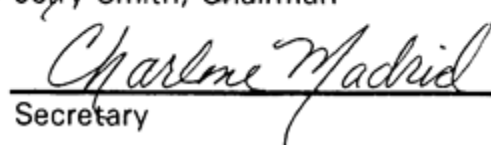
WHEREAS, the Planning Commission believes it in the best interest of the County that Costilla County Comprehensive Plan be adopted,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF COSTILLA COUNTY, COLORADO:

1. Costilla County Comprehensive Plan, dated 1999, be and hereby is adopted.
2. Costilla County Comprehensive Plan as adopted hereby, expressly includes maps and other matter, intended by the Planning Commission to form the whole of Costilla County Comprehensive Plan, all of which materials are contained within the plan document itself, and which plan document is hereby declared to be a part of the Plan.
3. That the action of the Planning Commission adopting Costilla County Comprehensive Plan shall be recorded on Costilla County Comprehensive Plan by the identifying signature of the Secretary to the Commission.
4. A copy of this Resolution shall be attached to each copy of Costilla County Comprehensive Plan and shall serve as an attestation that each such copy is a true and correct copy of the Plan as adopted.
5. That an attested copy of Costilla County Comprehensive Plan shall be and hereby is certified to the Costilla County Board of Commissioners pursuant to § 30-28-109, C.R.S.

MOVED, SECONDED AND ADOPTED ON THE 14th DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 1999 BY THE AFFIRMATIVE VOTES OF NOT LESS THAN A MAJORITY OF THE ENTIRE MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION, BY A VOTE OF 6 YES AND 0 NOS.


Jerry Smith, Chairman


Secretary

Acknowledgments

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Chapter One

Introduction

Overview

The 1999 Costilla County Comprehensive Plan (Plan) provides Costilla County, Colorado with a broad policy tool for guiding decisions concerning land use and future growth. The Plan builds upon and succeeds a previous comprehensive planning effort completed in 1978, known as The Costilla County - San Luis - Blanca Comprehensive Plan.

The Plan is prepared in accordance with state statutes that authorize the Costilla County Planning Commission to develop a master plan for the physical development of the unincorporated territory within Costilla County. Per C.R.S. 30-28-107, the purpose of the Plan is "guiding and accomplishing a coordinated and harmonious development of the relevant territory, which, in accordance with present and future needs and resources, will best promote the general welfare of the inhabitants" of Costilla County.

In the spirit of intergovernmental cooperation, Costilla County and its three largest communities - San Luis, Blanca, and Fort Garland - agreed to jointly participate in this multi-jurisdictional comprehensive planning effort. Due to the intergovernmental nature of the planning effort, Costilla County received a Smart Growth Regional Partnerships Grant for the project.

The Plan area includes unincorporated Costilla County and its settlements of Fort Garland, San Acacio, Viejo San Acacio, Mesita, Jaroso, Garcia, San Pedro, Chama, San Pablo, Los Fuertes and San Francisco. Sub-area plans are included for San Luis, Blanca, and Fort Garland, and a three-mile area plan, prepared in accordance with CRS 31-12-105, addresses future annexation requirements for the incorporated communities of Blanca and San Luis.

The Plan is best described as a character-based comprehensive plan, structured to respect the unique qualities of Costilla County. The Plan contains policies that recognize Costilla County's sensitive natural environment, retain a sense of place, and seek to achieve long-term economic sustainability. The Plan is also action-oriented, with specific measures identified for implementing Plan directions and policies. Importantly, the Plan is a direct result of its development, a process to create a "living document" that embodies the county's vision.

The Planning Process

The preparation of the Plan balanced public involvement with political acceptance, and technical analysis with policy development. The planning process was facilitated by a consultant team headed by MJ Landers & Associates, Inc., with the assistance of the Costilla County Planning and Zoning Department.

The project formally began with two sets of the county "forums", held on February 10th and 11th in San Luis and Fort Garland, respectively. Publicity for these meetings included press releases in the Costilla County Free Press and La Sierra newspapers; paid advertising in La Sierra newspaper, public service announcements on KRZA and KGIW radio, and a project poster distributed to area businesses and organizations.

The purpose of the first set of meetings was to understand resident perspectives concerning the county and its future. After an introduction to the project, participants discussed 1) the qualities and values of Costilla County, 2) concerns about present conditions and county issues, and 3) ideas for the future of Costilla County.

Following the first set of meetings, a newsletter was distributed along with a questionnaire at various locations within Costilla County. Information from the first town meeting was used to formulate the questionnaire, which addressed growth and development issues, capital improvements, land use regulation and other general attitudes concerning life in Costilla County. Project newsletters and other publicity materials are located in Appendix A, and questionnaire results are located in Appendix B.

Information critical to the planning effort was collected, compiled, and categorized into a project bibliography (Appendix C). Twelve maps were produced for planning analysis, all using base information provided by Costilla County: Environmental Character, Geologic Conditions, Water Resources, Environmental Constraints, Slope Analysis, Wildlife, Roads, Recreation and Open Lands, Existing Land Use, Zoning, and Subdivisions. These maps are found in Chapters Two, Three and Four, as appropriate to their subject.

Using background mapping and information from the first set of meetings, a Plan Alternatives graphic was prepared. The Plan Alternatives outlined a variety of issues, including growth management, antiquated subdivisions, recreational opportunities, environmental protection, and business attraction. During a county forum held June 10th, 1999, participants completed a questionnaire expressing preferences for various options.

Following the June 10th, 1999 county forum, preferred options (favorable responses greater than 80%) were integrated into a draft Plan Direction. The draft Plan Direction and its supporting information were the focus of an open house held July 24th and 25th, 1999 during the annual Santiago y Santa Ana festival. The Plan

Direction is located in Chapter Five, along with its more detailed Sub-Area Plans for Blanca, Fort Garland, and San Luis.

Concurrent with the preparation of the Plan, the Costilla County Land Use Code and the Town of San Luis Zoning Ordinances were reviewed and updated to address specific land use issues and achieve consistency with the new Plan. In addition, a zoning ordinance modeled on the San Luis code was prepared for the Town of Blanca. The project director and a land use attorney facilitated Planning Commission workshops concerning the codes on April 8th, 1999, and August 10th, 1999.

Creating an atmosphere of cooperation between the County and its largest communities is a vitally important component of the planning process. Costilla County, San Luis, Blanca and Fort Garland identified three major areas of cooperative interest: Comprehensive Plan Coordination, Annexation, and Development Review. A draft IGA addressing these areas of interest was prepared, per Article 20 of Title 29 of the Colorado Revised Statutes.

A Planning Commission worksession concerning the Plan, IGA and development regulations was held August 10th, 1999 at the San Luis Community Center. Following the meeting, copies of the Plan documents, and other products of the planning process, were available for review through August 31st at the Costilla County Planning and Zoning Department. Based on comments collected during the Plan review period, a summary of modifications was prepared to accompany the draft Costilla County Comprehensive Plan at a scheduled public hearing concerning its adoption August 31, 1999, in accordance with C.R.S. 30-28-108.

Following the public hearing, the summary of modifications was revised and presented for consideration during a regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting held September 14, 1999, at which time the Plan was adopted.

Use of the Plan

The format of the Plan is a hybrid of traditional, policy and character-based comprehensive plan styles. Major topic areas (Environment and Natural Resources, Public Infrastructure and Services, Land Use and Development, and Growth Management) are presented as individual chapters, each descriptive text, supporting statistical information, and relevant maps.

At the end of each chapter are "Directions, Policies and Actions". Plan goals and objectives, expressed as "Directions", are followed by "Policies", articulating the Directions into statements of public policy. "Actions" list one or more implementation measures that can be taken by Planning staff, the Planning Commission, or the Board of County Commissioner's, as appropriate, to support the Directions and Policies.

The "Plan Direction", found in Chapter Five, is an overall geographic reference of the County's growth management objectives, with specific Directions incorporated from preceding chapters. The Plan Direction should be used in conjunction with the "Directions, Policies and Actions" found in each chapter to help direct growth and community development. Additionally, the Blanca, Fort Garland and San Luis Area Sub-Area Plans provide an additional graphic reference for desired future land use patterns in these communities. The Three-Mile Area Plan graphic can be used to meet a statutory requirement for annexations proposed to Blanca and San Luis.

The Plan is considered an advisory document only, neither legislative nor judicial in nature, and not binding on the zoning discretion of Costilla County. Although advisory in nature, the Plan is the basis for regulatory measures inclusive of development code updates and project review recommendations. The Plan also serves as the foundation for intergovernmental agreements, capital improvement programming, and detailed studies and programs coordinated by public jurisdictions within Costilla County. The Plan is a county database, and can be used as supporting documentation for pursuing grants for community development activities.

The Plan should be consulted by Planning and Zoning Department staff, the Planning Commission, and the Board of County Commissioners when considering development proposals, updating land use regulations, working on intergovernmental issues, outlining work programs, preparing annual budgets, and reviewing progress toward meeting identified goals. The Plan should be also used to guide residents, land owners, and project applicants concerning land planning and community development objectives within Costilla County.

The Plan should be updated on an annual basis as specific actions are achieved and new strategies are identified. Policies within each of the topic chapters should also be reviewed on an annual basis and revised with changing circumstances, as appropriate. The entire document, and specifically the Plan Direction, should be considered for public review and update no later than five years from its adoption.

Chapter Two

Environment & Natural Resources

Introduction

A strong determinant of future growth and development potential is the physical environment. The character of the environment - its scenery, climate, topography, soils, vegetation, and geology - influences development patterns. Developing natural resources, including minerals, water, agriculture and timber, similar to developing land for residential, commercial, industrial or other purposes, requires consideration as to the carrying capacity of the environment. The carrying capacity of the environment is tempered by environmental constraints. Geologic hazards, sensitive wildlife habitat, and wildfire and flooding potential are examples of environmental constraints to land development. Taken together, the character of the physical environment, its resources and constraints provide direction as to where future growth may be appropriate and where it should be avoided in Costilla County.

PHYSICAL CHARACTER

Costilla County is located in south central Colorado, and is bordered by Las Animas County to the east, Alamosa County to the northeast, Huerfano County to the northwest, Conejos County to the west, and the state of New Mexico to the south (Figure 1). Crossing La Veta Pass over the Sangre De Cristo Range from the east, Costilla County is considered a "gateway" to the vast San Luis Valley. The spectacular 14,345 foot Mt. Blanca dominates the skyline in Costilla County. The total land area of the county covers 786,130 acres, or approximately 1,230 square miles.

Costilla County's average daily high temperatures are in the 80's during the summer months and in the 20's during the winter (Table 1). The average annual precipitation rate is 7.7 inches, and the average annual snowfall is 25.0 inches.

Table 1. Average Temperature in Costilla County

January Temperature 22.0 degrees Fahrenheit July Temperature 81.5 degrees Fahrenheit

Source: Colorado Department of Local Government

Ecoregions

An "ecoregion" is a description of physical characteristics, including climate, physiography, soils and vegetation. Costilla County is divided into two major ecoregions and several sub-ecoregions. The two major ecoregions found within Costilla County are the Southern Rockies and the Arizona-New Mexico Plateau. For the purpose of understanding more detailed physical characteristics specific to Costilla County, subecoregions are analyzed. The subecoregions are delineated on Map 1. The seven subecoregions within Costilla County are:

- High Elevation Tundra.
- Cool Moist Forest of Mid-High Elevation.
- Warm Dry Forest of Mid-Low Elevation.
- Southern Rockies Shrubland.
- Arizona-New Mexico Plateau Shrubland.
- Irrigated Flatlands.
- Salt Desert.

High Elevation Tundra

The high elevation tundra subecoregion is characterized by a cold climate, ranging from humid to arid depending on the season. Its physiography is mountaintops, with pergelic cryumbrepts-cryochrepts crystalline rock soils and above-treeline vegetation. High elevation tundra is located in the highest points of the Sangre De Cristo Range on the eastern edge of Costilla County, and on the top of Mount Blanca.

Cool Moist Forest of Mid-High Elevation

Steep rock outcrops, cyroboralfs haploborolls sedimentary rocks and a cool, humid climate characterize the cool moist forest of mid-high elevation subecoregion. The dense forest vegetation of this subecoregion consists of Englemen spruce and subalpine fir and aspen trees. The cool moist forest subecoregion is located below the high elevation tundra of the Sangre De Cristo Range, and on the slopes of Mount Blanca.

Warm Dry Forest of Mid-Low Elevation

Located at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Range, the warm dry forest of mid-low elevation subecoregion has several plant types on borolls-boralfs-crystalline and sedimentary rock soils.

Southern Rockies Shrubland

The Southern Rockies subcoregion is characterized by low-mid elevation semi-desert shrublands, in a semi-arid climate. The soil consists of borolls-crystalline and sedimentary rocks on rolling to irregular terrain.

Arizona-New Mexico Plateau Shrubland

Located at a lower elevation than the Southern Rockies shrubland subcoregion, the Arizona-New Mexico Plateau shrubland subcoregion is also differentiated by its soils: argids-psammaquents-orthents on irregular plains. The Arizona-New Mexico Plateau shrubland subcoregion is the largest subcoregion in Costilla County.

Irrigated Flatland

Irrigated flatlands are interspersed within the Arizona-New Mexico Plateau shrubland subcoregion. Like the Arizona-New Mexico Plateau shrublands, this arid subcoregion consists of argid-psammaquent-orthent soils, with crops as well as shrublands providing vegetation.

Salt Desert

The salt desert subcoregion is located along a small portion of the western edge of Costilla County. The arid salt desert is somewhat similar to the Arizona-New Mexico Plateau shrubland subcoregion, with argid-psammaquent-orthent soils across irregular, shrub-covered plains.

Geology

Costilla County contains over two dozen geologic formations. The majority of these formations are located along fault lines in the Sangre de Cristo Range. The dominant formation in the Sangre de Cristo Range within Costilla County consists of felsic and hornblendic gneisses, either separate or interlayered. Biotitic gneiss, schist, mignatite, granitic rocks, andesitic lavas, and quartzite conglomerates are also evident along the eastern side of Costilla County. Other significant formations include the Minturn, Sangre de Cristo, and Sante Fe. The valley floor is underlain with alluvials, conglomerates, and unclassified surficial deposits, with mesas formed by basalt flows and capped with tuff breccia. Geologic conditions are shown on Map 2.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural resources in Costilla County consist of minerals, water, and timber. Agriculture is also considered a natural resource for the purposes of this Plan, due to its interrelationship with water and timber resources in Costilla County.

Mineral Resources

Mineral resources, inclusive of mineral deposits and oil basins, are abundant in Costilla County. Mineral deposits and oil basins are shown on Map 2. Mineral deposits within Costilla County include fluorine, gold, silver, iron, titanium, magnesium, uranium, copper, vanadium, and sand and gravel. Currently, there is no active mining in Costilla County. The Black Mountain Gold Mine, located north of San Luis, opened in the early 1990's and recently closed. Reclamation of the site is now underway to prevent seepage of manganese and sulfates into Rito Seco Creek.

Three oil basins exist in Costilla County: the Precambrian, Raton, and San Luis. The Precambrian Oil Basin is largest of the three, underlying the majority of the Sangre De Cristo Range in Costilla County. The San Luis Oil Basin is somewhat of a misnomer for Costilla County, located entirely in the area surrounding Blanca and Fort Garland. Small slivers of the Raton Oil Basin are evident along the northeastern county line. Currently, there are no active oil wells in Costilla County. A recent oil test, the first since 1961, in the Ventero area south of Sanchez Reservoir yielded a dry hole.

Water Resources

Water resources are identified by their drainage basins, reservoirs, streams, and the acequia ditch system. Water resources are shown on Map 3. Four drainage basins exist in Costilla County. In order of size, these drainages are the Trinchera Creek, Culebra Creek, Costilla Creek and Purgatory River basins. The Trinchera Creek Basin covers the northern half of Costilla County. The Culebra Creek Basin covers the majority of the southern half of the county, with Costilla Creek draining the area south of Viejo San Acacio, and a small portion of the Purgatory River Basin drains the southeastern border area.

Three major reservoirs and several smaller reservoirs are located in Costilla County. Smith Reservoir is located a few miles south of Blanca, while Mountain Home Reservoir is located a few miles south of Fort Garland. A third major reservoir, Sanchez, is located south of San Pablo on Wild Horse Mesa.

Costilla County is bordered on its western edge by the Rio Grande River, the second longest river in the United States. Other streams in Costilla County are much smaller, and include Trinchera Creek, Culebra Creek and Costilla Creek. Importantly, however, it is the system of over 70 small streams and ditches in the Culebra Creek and Costilla Creek basins known as the acequia that is an irreplaceable water source for the county's agricultural farms and ranches.

Timber Resources

Harvesting of timber occurs on private land in eastern Costilla County. The largest timber operations are on the 53,700 acre Taylor Ranch and the 23,800 acre Jarosa Ranch. Issues associated with logging include watershed protection, the preservation of old growth forests, and compliance with land use regulations. Due to current lawsuits regarding these issues, information on timber operations is very limited at this time.

Agricultural Resources

The majority of the valley floor in Costilla County is used for agricultural purposes. Non-irrigated rangeland is used for cattle grazing. Irrigated croplands produce spring wheat, barley, oats, hay, alfalfa, and potatoes. Of Colorado's 63 counties, Costilla County is the State's 3rd largest potato producer and its 4th largest producer of spring wheat. A potato processing plant is located in Fort Garland. Canola, a plant that produces seeds that can be converted to cooking oil, is under consideration by several farmers for inclusion in their crop rotation.

The long-term economic viability of Costilla County's agricultural resource is threatened by potential rural subdivision development. Over 37,000 lots have been subdivided in Costilla County, approximately 98% of which remain vacant. Perhaps 22,000 of these lots are in areas of agricultural production.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

Many environmental conditions pose a constraint to development either in terms of physical constraints, such as excessive slope, or in terms of environmental resource preservation, such as protection of significant wildlife habitat.

Environmental constraints are classified in composite form on the Environmental Constraints graphic (Map 4). Areas of constraint are areas where development is not recommended, either due to requiring extensive mitigation, the presence of environmental hazards, or other factors limiting development activity. Areas where urban-level development could occur without creating a hazard, or requiring limited or no mitigation measures, are not shown as constrained.

Mapped Constraints

Mapping of environmental constraints focused on the use of Geographic Information System data provided by Costilla County and other agencies. Mapped constraints include the following:

- Water Bodies.
- Public Lands.
- Major Wetlands.
- Steep Slopes
- Sensitive Wildlife Habitat

Water Bodies

Bodies of water are obviously not developable and are therefore identified as a base constraint. Mapped water bodies consist of Smith, Mountain Home, and Sanchez reservoirs.

Public Lands

As only private land is developable, public land is considered a base constraint. Costilla County has little public land, with only a sliver of the Rio Grande National Forest on its eastern border.

Major Wetlands

Major wetlands are defined as wetland areas larger than one acre in size that require an Army Corps of Engineers 404 Permit to develop or mitigate for the purposes of development. Major wetland areas are identified south of Blanca, near Smith Reservoir. It is important to note that other major wetland areas may exist that are not shown on Map 4, and detailed studies should be prepared prior to any development activity in a potential major wetland area.

Steep Slopes

As slope increases, land becomes less suitable for development. Steep slopes generally have the following increased risks: wildfire; unstable soils; problems with road design, construction, and maintenance; and difficulty with access by fire protection equipment.

Steep slopes are located in the eastern portion of Costilla County, within the Sangre De Cristo Range. Slopes in excess of eight percent is the principal base constraint within Costilla County. For that reason, a separate graphic (Map 5) analyzes slope conditions. The Slope Analysis classifies slopes into four categories:

1. Slopes between 0% and 8%. Most road design standards and building codes allow construction within this range.
2. Slopes between 9% and 15%. Some mitigation may be necessary, with possible structural reinforcement along with undesired cut and fill activity.

3. Slopes between 16% and 33%. Significant mitigation is necessary, with need to evaluate proposed construction on a case-by-case basis.
4. Slopes greater than 33%. Any mitigation not recommended, due to potential risk of hazards.

Sensitive Wildlife Habitat

The Division of Wildlife mapped 22 wildlife species in Costilla County, and then used a ranking system to prepare a composite map of significant wildlife habitat. Map 6 classifies the potential for wildlife impact into five categories:

1. Low. Approximately 25% of Costilla County has a low potential for impact from development or human disturbance on wildlife habitat.
2. Moderately Low. Approximately 28% of Costilla County has a moderately low potential for impact from development or human disturbance on wildlife habitat.
3. Moderate. Approximately .5% of Costilla County has a moderate potential for impact from development or human disturbance on wildlife habitat.
4. High. 72% of vertebrate wildlife species in Costilla County are dependent on riparian areas and wetland habitats. Examples of these dependent species are the white pelican and beaver. As a result, approximately 42% of Costilla County has a high potential for impact from development or human disturbance on wildlife habitat.
5. Very High. Examples of species with habitat which would qualify for very high impact potential are those on that are listed as an endangered or threatened species, such as the black-footed ferret and the Rio Grande sucker. Other very high impact potential areas include those that have experienced human/wildlife conflicts, such as interaction with black bear and mountain lion. Approximately 3.5% of Costilla County has a very high potential for impact from development or human disturbance on wildlife habitat.

Due to the importance of high and very high potential wildlife impacts, these attributes are included on Map 3, Environmental Constraints, in addition to the base constraints. Although not a constraint to development per se, developing wildlife habitat would have a significant impact on Costilla County's wildlife.

Other Constraints

In addition to the above mapped attributes, the following are environmental constraints for which mapped information in an electronic format is not currently available:

- Geologic Hazards.
- Soil Constraints.
- Floodplain Hazards.
- Wildfire Hazards.
- Prime Agricultural Land.

Geologic Hazards

The Colorado Geologic Survey define geologic hazards as "a geologic phenomenon which is so adverse to past, current or foreseeable construction or land use as to constitute a significant hazard to public health and safety or to property." Geologic hazards in Costilla County include avalanches, landslides, rockfalls, mudflows and debris fans, and unstable slopes. These areas are all located in the eastern edge of Costilla County in the Sangre de Cristo Range. Geologic hazard mapping completed in 1976 is available at the Costilla County Planning and Zoning Department.

Soil Constraints

Costilla County has 23 soil types, the majority of which are cool, deep and well-drained. Although several soil associations have some characteristics of poorly drained soils, only three soil types are exclusively either somewhat poorly or poorly drained:

1. Nortonville-Alamosa-LaSausas Association: Located west and south of Blanca, along a small upper section of the Garland Ditch, along Ventero Creek south of Sanchez Reservoir, and along the majority of Trinchera Creek west of Smith Reservoir.
2. Cryaquolls Association: Located along a small stretch of Culebra Creek downstream of its intersection with Whiskey Creek.
3. LaJara - Vastine-Fluvaquents Association: Located along a small stretch of Ute Creek, along a small section upstream of Mountain Home reservoir, and along San Francisco Creek between San Luis and La Valley.

In general, these soils may pose problems for building foundations and the siting of septic systems. Septic systems may also be constrained in some areas by clay formations with low permeability. Soil mapping for Costilla County is available from the Soil Conservation Service.

Floodplain Hazards

Floodplain hazards are located along Culebra Creek and other streams originating from the Sangre de Cristo Range. Development in floodplains should be discouraged due to the potential risk to public safety and property damage. Floodplain mapping for Costilla County is available from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Wildfire Hazards

In general, potential threats of wildfire exist on arid, vegetated hillsides. To varying degrees wildfire hazard areas exist in Costilla County, primarily within the Sangre De Cristo Range, although implementing defensible space guidelines can reduce wildfire constraints to development.

Prime Agricultural Land

Although agricultural land is not a constraint to development in the same manner as floodplains, geologic hazards or steep slopes, agriculture is a significant component of the local economy. Prime agricultural land, irrigated fields, and farmlands of statewide importance are therefore areas where development should be avoided if possible. These areas are identified on maps prepared by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

DIRECTIONS, POLICIES & ACTIONS

Direction: Preserve scenic views of Mt. Blanca and the Sangre de Cristo Range.

Policy ENR-01

All buildings and structures shall be integrated with their natural surroundings. Building placement and height shall be designed to avoid blocking scenic views from public rights-of-way, parks, and other public spaces. All electric utilities shall be placed underground where feasible.

Policy ENR-02

Buildings and structures shall not be placed on a ridgeline that will create the effect of "skylining" the structure.
Action(s):

" Create a "land preservation subdivision" process for new subdivisions that "clusters" rural residential development to protect key viewsheds.

" Update Land Use Code with height guidelines that retain unimpeded the visual landmark of Mount Blanca, as viewed from public rights-of-way, parks, and other public spaces.

" Update Land Use Code to require that all new development install utilities underground.

" Update Land Use Code to restrict ridgeline development.

" Update Land Use Code with design guidelines that screen road cuts and structures, and sign regulations that protect views along roadways within Costilla County.

Direction: Protect mineral resources while ensuring that extraction activities are economically self-sufficient and environmentally appropriate.

Policy ENR-03

Exploration and extraction of minerals from known mineral resource areas shall occur prior to any development that would permanently prevent extraction of the mineral resource. Where it can be shown through sufficient evidence that it is not economical to extract a mineral, appropriate surface development shall not be discouraged.

Policy ENR-04

Costilla County residents shall not subsidize the cost of mineral extraction activities, or long-term reclamation costs. Developers of all mineral extraction activities shall be required to pay for the construction and maintenance of any capital improvements which may be necessitated by their projects. Developers of all mineral extraction activities shall also be required to pay any Costilla County operating expenses directly attributable to the mineral extraction activity, or support services required to extract said resources.

Policy ENR-05

Costilla County residents shall benefit from mineral extraction activities. Economic benefits such as jobs, offices, purchases, etc. associated with mineral extraction activities shall remain within Costilla County to the maximum extent possible.

Policy ENR-06

All mineral extraction activities shall be compatible with adjacent land uses, and designed to minimize conflicts with agricultural operation, residences, tourism and wildlife.

Policy ENR-07

All mining activities shall include a plan to mitigate any potential environmental hazards.

Action(s):

" Update Land Use Code to require that a qualified professional be retained by a prospective applicant proposing mineral extraction activities to prepare a mitigation plan addressing environmental impacts.
Direction: Protect timber resources while ensuring that logging activities are economically self-sufficient and environmentally appropriate.

Policy ENR-08

Costilla County residents shall not subsidize the cost of logging activities. Logging operators shall be required to pay for the construction and maintenance of any capital improvements which may be necessitated by their activities. Logging companies shall also be required to pay any Costilla County operating expenses directly attributable to the logging activity.

Policy ENR-09

Costilla County residents shall benefit from logging activities. Economic benefits such as jobs, offices, purchases, etc. associated with logging activities shall remain within Costilla County to the maximum extent possible.

Policy ENR-10

All logging activities shall be compatible with adjacent land uses, and designed to minimize conflicts with agricultural operations, residences, tourism and wildlife.

Policy ENR-11

All logging activities shall include a plan to mitigate any potential environmental hazards.

Action(s):

" Update Land Use Code to require that a qualified professional be retained by a prospective applicant proposing logging activities to prepare a mitigation plan addressing environmental impacts.

Direction: Protect water resources.

Policy ENR-12

The surface and ground waters of the Rio Grande River shall be protected from land uses and management practices which could cause significant degradation of water quality or impair the natural protection and/or treatment processes provided by wetlands, floodplains and riparian areas.

Policy ENR-13

Decisions to locate water supplies, wastewater treatment systems, and other facilities shall be made in a manner that protects water quality. Decisions regarding facility location shall also recognize the protection of floodplains, geologic hazard areas, wildlife habitats, wetlands and agricultural land.

Policy ENR-14

The surface and ground waters of the Rio Grande River shall be protected from the uses of pesticides, fertilizers, algacides, road deicing and friction materials, and other chemicals which would temporarily or permanently cause a significant degradation of water quality or impair the current or classified uses of these waters.

Action(s):

" Develop a Wellhead Protection Plan to reduce the likelihood of contamination of the county's drinking water supply. A wellhead protection plan would examine the hydrology of the area to delineate a wellhead protection area, inventory existing and potential contaminants, create management guidelines, develop contingency plans in case of contamination, recommend siting criteria for new wells in case expansion is necessary, and promote public involvement and education programs.

" Update Land Use Code to restrict any activity that would degrade water quality.

Direction: Protect prime agricultural land from development.

Policy ENR-15

Annexation and/or subdivision of productive agricultural land shall be discouraged.

Policy ENR-16

The practice of agricultural protection techniques such as purchase of development rights, voluntary conservation easements, land trusts and related mechanisms which preserve the rural character and agricultural economy of Costilla County shall be encouraged. Agricultural protection techniques shall be focused on relatively intact and economically viable ranches and farms.

Action(s):

" Create a "land preservation subdivision" process for new subdivisions that "clusters" rural residential development to preserve existing agricultural uses.

" Provide incentives for consolidation of existing residential subdivision lots to achieve lower density rural residential development.

Direction: Maintain the integrity of the acequia ditch system.

Policy ENR-17

The Acequia ditch system shall be maintained in a natural state. Any development that occurs upstream of irrigated lands shall consider measures to prevent adverse impacts on water supply for downstream agricultural operations.

Action(s):

" Update Land Use Code to restrict logging and overgrazing within the Watershed Protection Overlay District.

Direction: Discourage development of major wetlands.

Policy ENR-18

Development in high water table and/or wetland areas shall be avoided. Where development is unavoidable, all construction shall be designed to provide the least impact on wetland areas as practicable, in accordance with US Army Corp of Engineers 404 Permit requirements.

Policy ENR-19

Prior to seeking project approval for construction activity in potential wetland areas, a qualified professional shall be retained by the developer to determine the full extent of potential wetlands.

Policy ENR-20

Efforts to maintain the water storage capacity and water quality of wetlands shall be encouraged. Activities that result in a loss of wetlands, eutrophication of wetlands, or loss of wildlife dependent upon wetlands shall be discouraged.

Action(s):

" Update Land Use Code to require that a qualified professional be retained by a prospective applicant to determine potential wetland areas on proposed development sites.

" Create a new "overlay" zoning district that restricts land development in wetlands.

Direction: Discourage development on steep slopes.

Policy ENR-21

Development shall be avoided in areas with slopes over 33 percent. Development in areas with 16 to 33 percent slopes should be avoided where possible, using clustering or other techniques to avoid the steepest portions of the site. If development in these areas is unavoidable, measures should be taken to minimize excessive cut and fills in the design of roads and building site layout.

Policy ENR-22

Development shall be avoided in areas with a history of slope failure complex, unstable slopes, or in areas prone to landslide and debris fans.

Policy ENR-23

Unless required for construction, vegetation shall not be removed in areas that may contribute to a landslide, mudflow or debris flow. Areas of vegetation removed for construction shall be reclaimed with new vegetation.

Action(s):

" Update Land Use Code to require that a qualified professional be retained by a prospective applicant to determine potential unstable slope conditions on proposed development sites.

" Update Land Use Code to require that a plan identifying erosion control measures be submitted with all development proposals.

Direction: Protect significant wildlife habitat and corridors.

Policy ENR-24

Development in areas of high or very high impact on wildlife shall be avoided. If development in these areas is unavoidable, a wildlife mitigation plan shall be provided that specifies protection of migration corridors, nesting sites, calving areas and other characteristics of critical habitat.

Policy ENR-25

The practice of wildlife protection techniques such as purchase of development rights, voluntary conservation easements, land trusts and related mechanisms which preserve the wildlife resources of Costilla County shall be encouraged.

Policy ENR-26

Riparian vegetation shall be preserved wherever possible through the use of setbacks, clustering or other techniques, in order to preserve wildlife habitat.

Action(s):

" Update Land Use Code to require the submittal of a wildlife mitigation plan for proposed development within areas of identified significant wildlife habitat.

" Create a new "overlay" zoning district that restricts land development in areas with significant wildlife habitat.

" Create a "land preservation subdivision" process for new subdivisions that "clusters" rural residential development, preserving open lands and wildlife habitat.

" Update Land Use Code to require a minimum 100 foot building setback from all stream corridors.

Direction: Expand environmental protection.

Policy ENR-27

Costilla County shall work with other agencies, in conjunction with the San Luis Valley GIS/GPS Authority, to develop electronic mapping of prime agricultural lands, geologic hazards, soils, floodplains, and wildfire hazards.

Action(s):

" In conjunction with the San Luis Valley GIS/GPS Authority, pursue grant funding to complete environmental mapping.

" Work with the Nature Conservancy, Colorado State University, and/or other agencies involved with the Natural Heritage Assessment to prioritize potential conservation sites that support rare and imperiled plants and animals.

Direction: Discourage development in geologic hazard areas.

Policy ENR-28

Prior to seeking project approval for construction activity in potential geologic hazard areas, a qualified professional shall be retained by the developer to determine the full extent of potential geologic hazards.

Action(s):

" Update Land Use Code to require that a qualified professional be retained by a prospective applicant to determine potential geologic hazards on proposed development sites.

" Create a new "overlay" zoning district that restricts land development in areas with geologic hazards.

Direction: Discourage development in locations with poor soil conditions, or activities that create soil erosion.

Policy ENR-29

Prior to seeking project approval for construction activity in areas with poor soil conditions, a qualified professional shall be retained by the developer to determine the full extent of potential soil problems and their impact on the siting of septic systems.

Policy ENR-30

A plan identifying erosion control measures shall be submitted with all development proposals.

Action(s):

" Update Land Use Code to require that a qualified professional be retained by a prospective applicant to identify soil conditions, determine as necessary appropriate mitigation measures.

" Update Land Use Code to require that an erosion control plan be submitted with all development proposals.

" Create a new "overlay" zoning district that requires mitigation measures for land development in areas with poor soil conditions.

Direction: Limit floodplain development to maintain public safety and protect the integrity of riparian corridors.

Policy ENR-31

Development in designated floodplain areas shall be avoided. Where development is unavoidable, all construction shall be designed to prevent damage due to flooding in accordance with FEMA guidelines. In no event shall development in designated floodplains be permitted to raise the flood elevation of downstream property.

Policy ENR-32

Unless required for construction, vegetation shall not be removed in flood plains. Areas of vegetation removed for construction shall be reclaimed with new vegetation.

Action(s):

" Update Land Use Code to restrict development within the Floodplain Hazard Overlay District.

Direction: Discourage development in wildfire hazard areas.

Policy ENR-33

Development in areas designated on wildfire hazard maps as severe wildfire hazard shall be avoided. If development in these areas is unavoidable, measures to increase defensible space and otherwise mitigate wildfire hazards shall be identified and implemented by the developer.

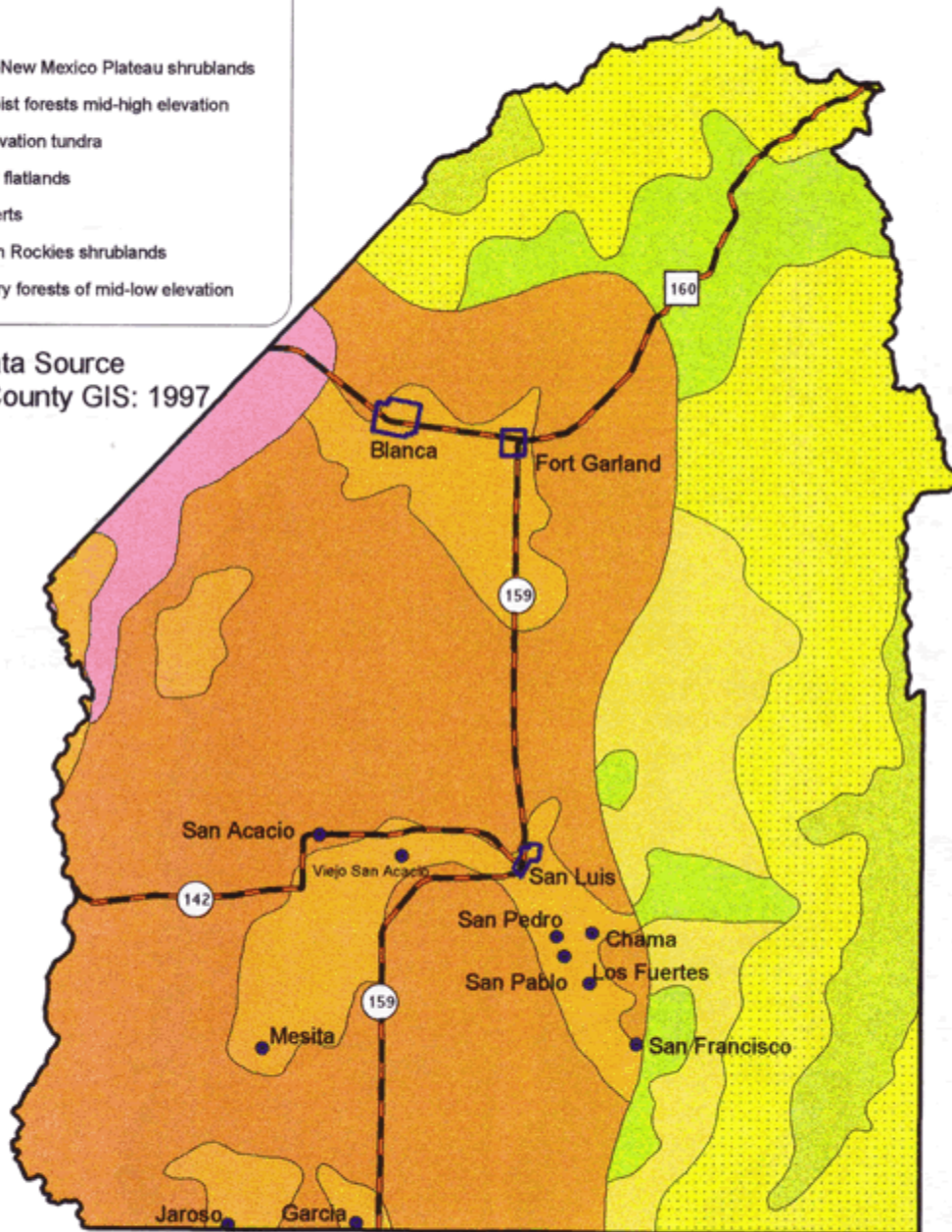
Action(s):

" Create a new "overlay" zoning district that requires measures to increase defensible space in areas with wildfire hazards.

Map 1 Environmental Character

- County Boundary
- Town Planning Areas
- Other Towns
- Highways
- Arizona-New Mexico Plateau shrublands
- Cool-moist forests mid-high elevation
- High elevation tundra
- Irrigated flatlands
- Saltdeserts
- Southern Rockies shrublands
- Warm dry forests of mid-low elevation

Data Source
Costilla County GIS: 1997



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Map 2 Geologic Conditions

- County Boundary
- Town Planning Areas
- Other Towns
- Highways
- Mineral Deposits**
 - FLUORINE
 - GOLD
 - SILVER
 - GOLD, SILVER
 - IRON
 - TITANIUM, IRON
 - MAGNESIUM
 - SAND & GRAVEL
 - URANIUM, COPPER, VANADIUM

- Oil Basins
- PRECAMBRIAN
- RATION
- SAN LUIS

- Belden Fm
- Mesero Fm
- Delata, Purgative, Montano, Ration Creek, and Entrada Fms
- Sangre de Cristo Fm
- Unclassified Surficial Deposits and Underlying Alluvial Fm
- Basalt Flows
- Glacial Drift (Piedmont) and Glaciation (Butte Lake)
- Gravels and Alluviums (Piedmont and Butte Lake Age)
- Basalt Flows and Associated Tuff Breccia and Conglomerate
- Basaltic Intrusive Rocks Related to Basalt Flows
- Intra-Ash Flow Andesitic Lavae
- Middle Tertiary Intrusive Rocks
- Pre-Ash Flow Andesitic Lavae, Breccias, Tuffs, and Conglomerates
- Santa Fe Fm
- South Park Fm
- Biotite Gneiss, Schist, and Migmatite
- Felsic and Hornblende Gneisses
- Granitic Rocks
- Mafic Rocks
- Quartzite Conglomerate
- Granitic Rocks

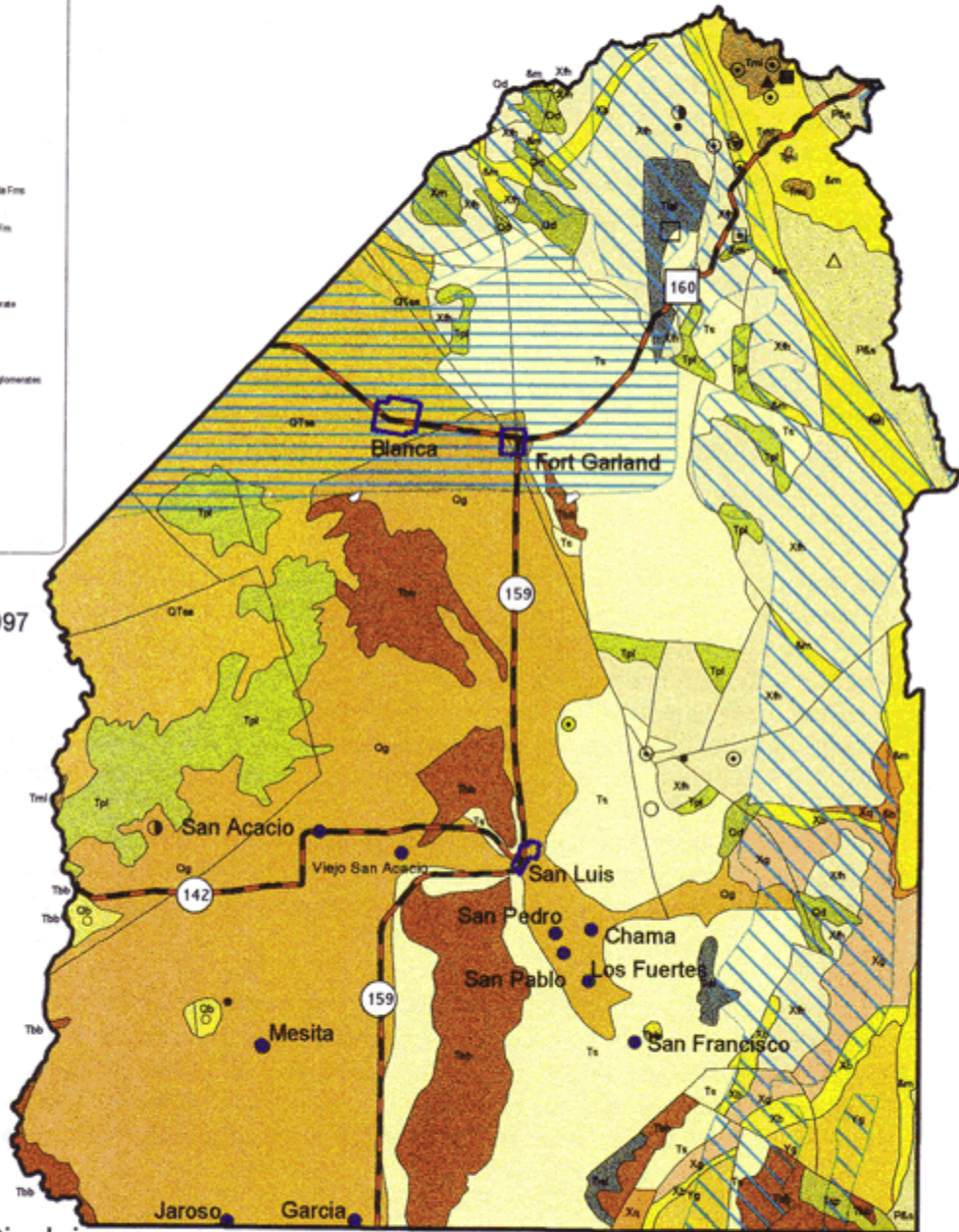
Data Source
Costilla County GIS: 1997

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Costilla County Comprehensive Plan

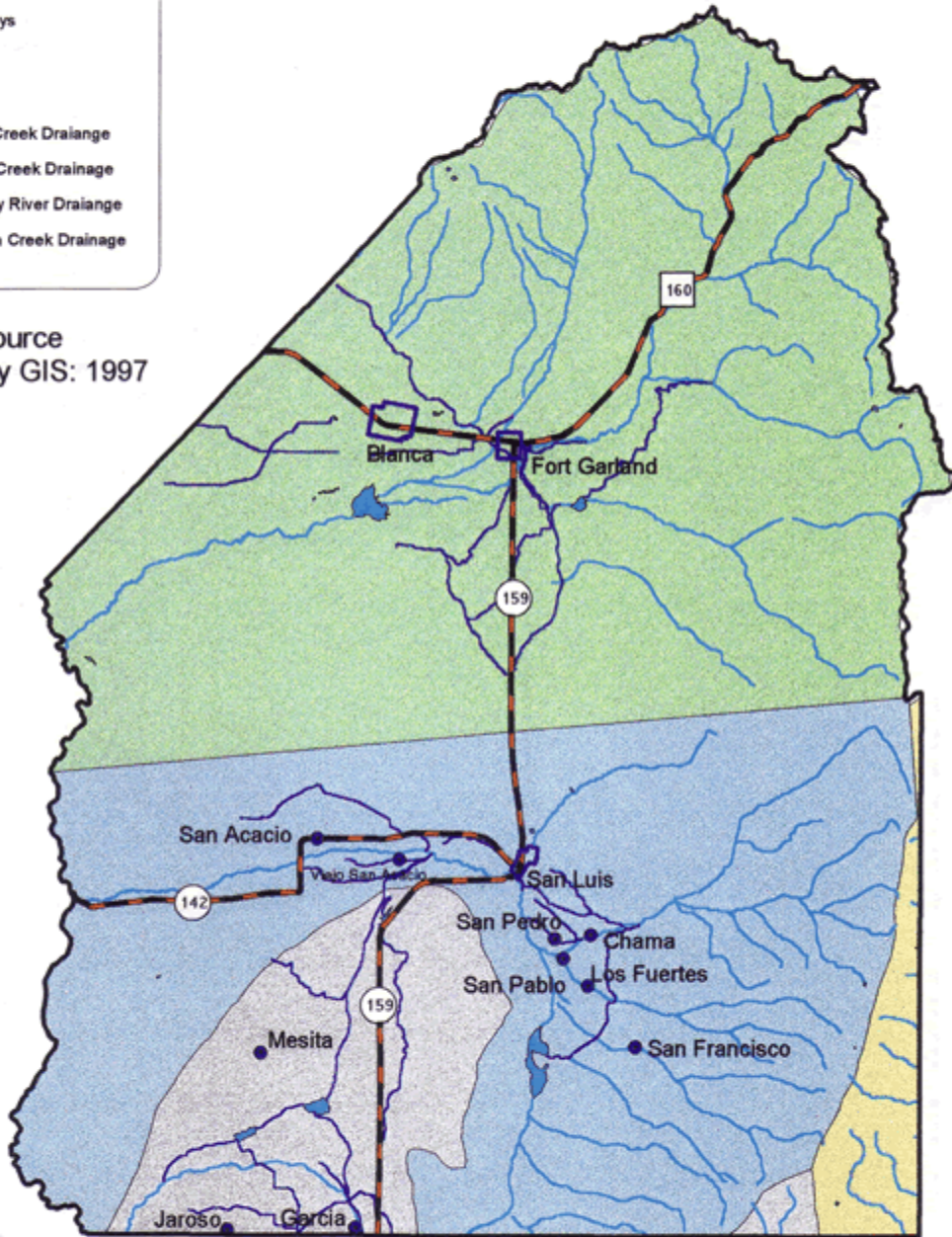


Map 3 Water Resources

-  County Boundary
-  Town Planning Areas
-  Other Towns
-  Highways
-  Ditches
-  Waterways
-  Lakes
- Drainage Basins**
-  Costilla Creek Drainage
-  Culebra Creek Drainage
-  Purgatory River Drainage
-  Trinchera Creek Drainage

Data Source
Costilla County GIS: 1997

Costilla County Comprehensive Plan



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5 0 5 10 Miles



Map 4
Environmental Constraints

-  County Boundary
-  Town Planning Areas
-  Other Towns
-  Highways

Base Constraint*



Wildlife Constraint



High

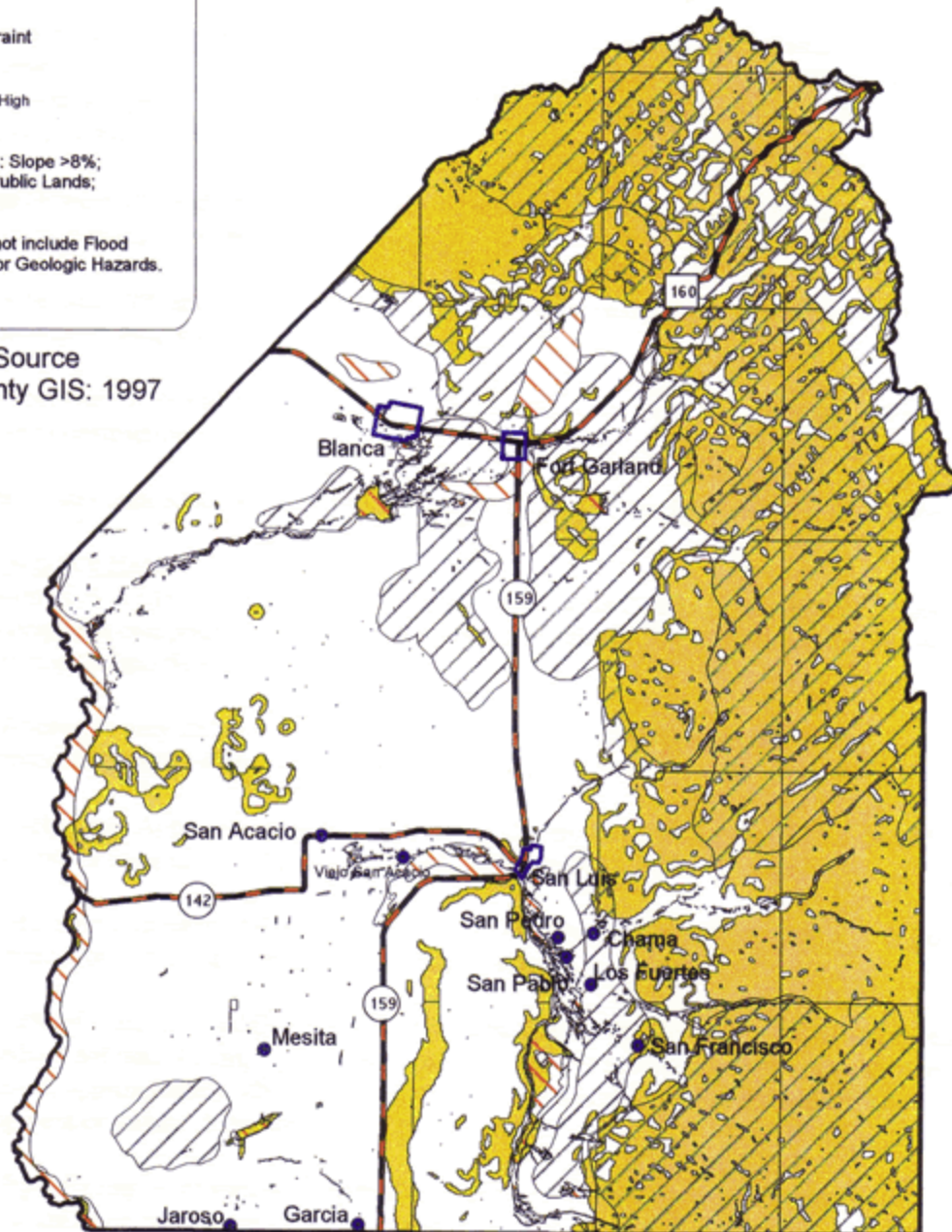


Very High

*Which Includes: Slope >8%;
Water Bodies; Public Lands;
Major Wetlands.

This map does not include Flood
Plains, Wildfire or Geologic Hazards.

Data Source
Costilla County GIS: 1997



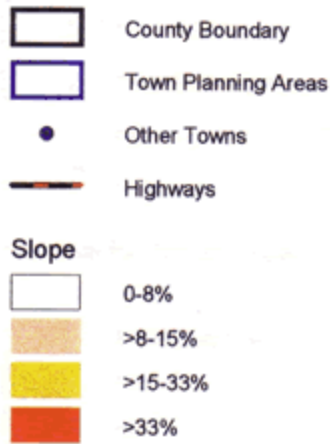
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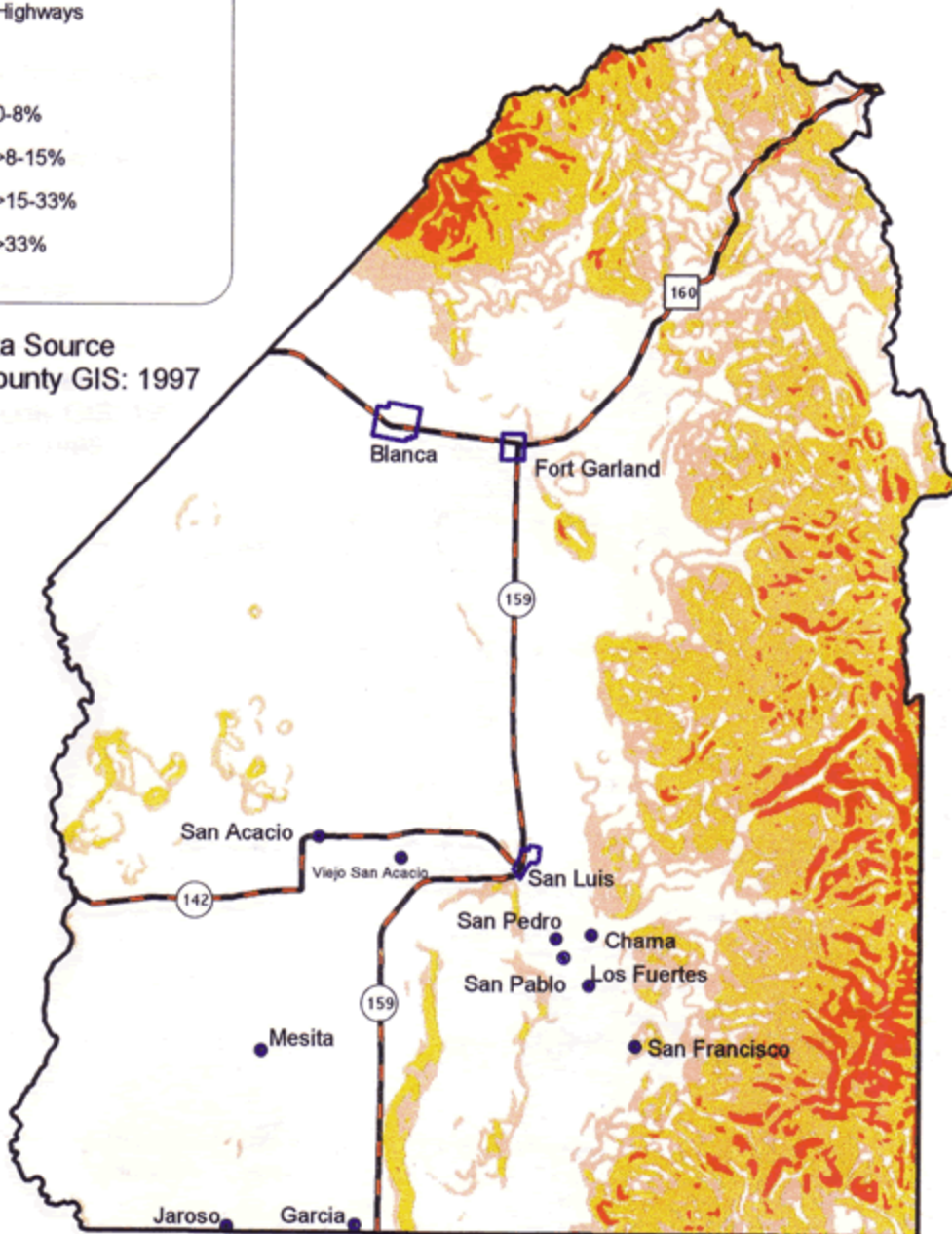


Map 5 Slope Analysis



Costilla County Comprehensive Plan

Data Source
Costilla County GIS: 1997







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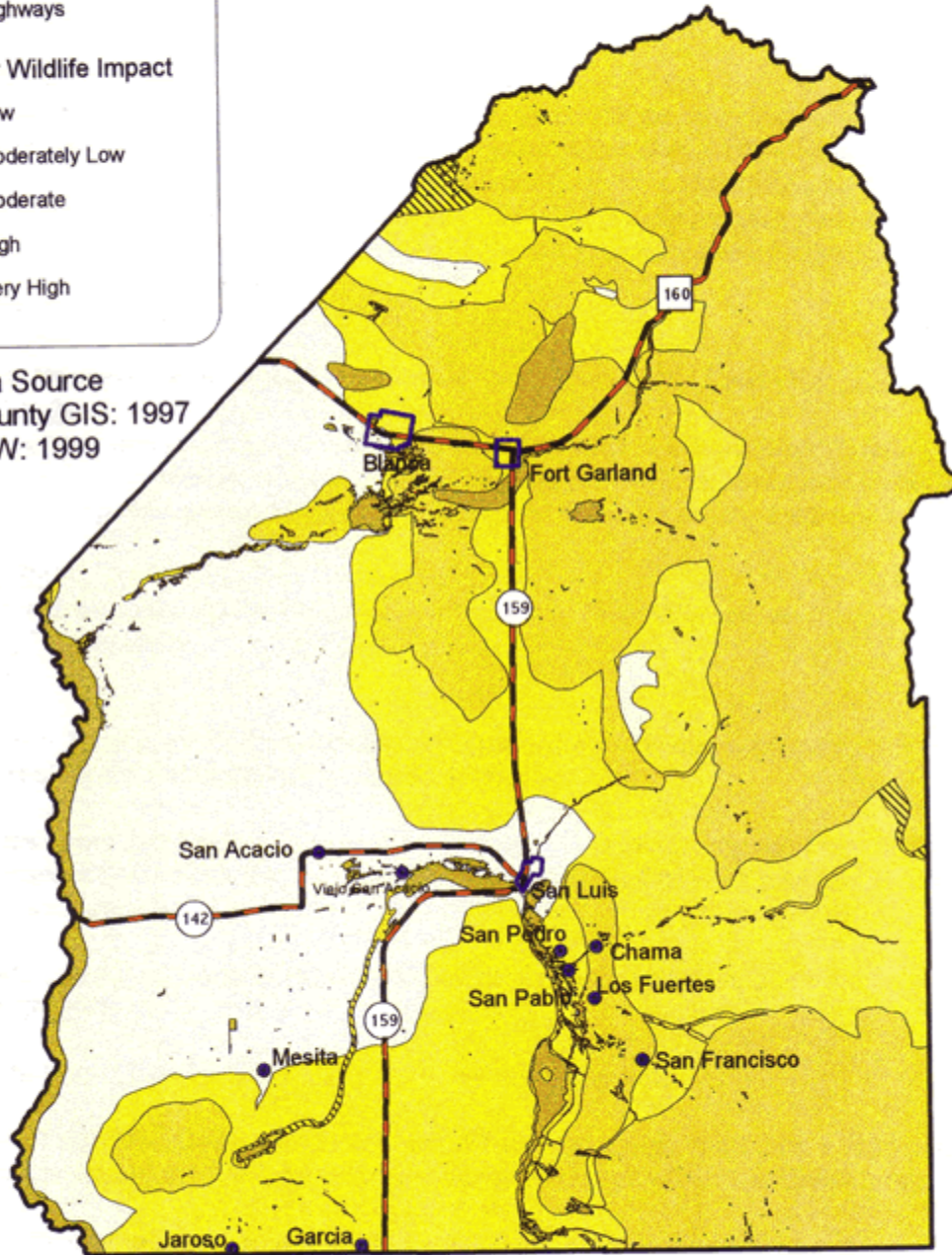
Map 6 Wildlife

-  County Boundary
-  Town Planning Areas
-  Other Towns
-  Highways

Potential for Wildlife Impact

-  Low
-  Moderately Low
-  Moderate
-  High
-  Very High

Data Source
Costilla County GIS: 1997
DOW: 1999



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Chapter Three

Population, Economy & Land Use

Introduction

The population, economy, and use of land within Costilla County are interrelated. Costilla County's historic settlement, cultural resources and economic conditions dictate land use patterns. Existing and future land use patterns are also shaped by environmental constraints (Chapter Two) and service infrastructure (Chapter Four). An understanding of population attributes, the local economy and the use of land within Costilla County provides guidance as to what type and rate of growth may be appropriately anticipated.

SETTLEMENTS

Costilla County was established in 1861 as one of the first counties in the Colorado Territory. Indians hunted in the area, but never settled. People began settling the area as early as 1851, although new communities were developed into the early 1900's. Several communities (Eastdale, Garland City, Russell, Sierra) no longer exist. Settlement patterns for those communities that currently exist are categorized as follows:

- San Luis, Viejo San Acacio, and San Francisco.
- San Pablo, San Pedro, Chama and Los Fuertes.
- Fort Garland.
- Garcia.
- Blanca, San Acacio, Mesita, and Jaroso.

San Luis, Viejo San Acacio, and San Francisco

The oldest town in Colorado, San Luis was established in 1851 by Indo-Hispano farmers migrating north from New Mexico. Located west of San Luis and south of SH 142, Viejo San Acacio was established in 1852 by summer farmers from New Mexico. Located five miles east of San Luis, San Francisco was established in 1854.

San Pablo, San Pedro, Chama and Los Fuertes

San Pablo, San Pedro, Chama and Los Fuertes were also settled as farming communities during the 1850's in an area known as Vallejos ("the valley"), located between San Luis and San Francisco.

Fort Garland

Named for Brigadier General John Garland, Fort Garland was built in 1858 as a base for military operations. In 1883 the Fort was abandoned, leaving civilians to continue settling the area.

Garcia

Garcia, formerly named Los Plazas Manzanares, was established in the mid 1880's on the Colorado-New Mexico border by missionaries.

Blanca, San Acacio, Mesita and Jaroso.

The now-defunct 32 mile San Luis Southern Railroad is responsible for the initial development of these four communities. Located four miles west of Fort Garland on SH 160, Blanca was established in 1908 by the San Luis Valley Land Company and incorporated in 1910. San Acacio and Mesita were both developed by the Costilla Estate Development Company in the early 1900's. Located south of Mesita on the Colorado-New Mexico border, Jaroso was established in 1914 after a railroad depot was built there in 1910.

Historic and Archeological Sites

Costilla County has numerous sites of archeological or historic significance. Archeological sites are not identified in order to preserve their artifacts from disturbance. The following historic sites are listed on a National or State Historic Register.

- Fort Garland (National Register 02/26/1970; State Register 12/11/1996, 5CT46).
- The Barlow and Sanderson Stagecoach (State Register 06/14/1995, 5CT46.1).
- San Acacio-San Luis Southern Railway Depot (State Register 12/09/1998, 5CC22).
- Plaza de San Luis de la Culebra Historic District (National Register, 1978).
- San Luis Bridge (National Register, 1978).

A list of additional historic resources is available from the Colorado Historical Society.

Fort Garland

Built in 1858, Fort Garland is a compound of buildings representing Territorial Adobe architecture. The Colorado Historical Society operates Fort Garland as a museum.

The Barlow and Sanderson Stagecoach

The Barlow and Sanderson Stagecoach, a rare example of an Abbot-Downing mud wagon built around 1871, is located in the Fort Garland compound.

San Acacio-San Luis Southern Railway Depot

Built in 1910, the two-story San Acacio-San Luis Southern Railway Depot is the largest depot constructed by the San Luis Southern Railway.

Plaza de San Luis de la Culebra Historic District

Constructed in the early 1850's as Colorado's first settlement, this historic district is a well-preserved example of Spanish town building.

San Luis Bridge

Built over Culebra Creek in 1911, the San Luis Bridge is one of the earliest unaltered bridges of its type in Colorado.

POPULATION

The following tables provide a time series of Costilla County's population trends:

Table 2. Costilla County Population: 1940 - 1990

Year	Population	Housing Units
1990	3,190	1,743
1980	3,071	1,437
1970	3,091	1,114
1960	4,219	1,388
1950	6,067	1,662
1940	7,533	1,765

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census

Table 3. Costilla County Population: 1990 - 1997

Year	Population	Housing Units	HH Size	Vacancy Rate (%)
1997	3,500	2,133	2.66	38.40
1996	3,438	2,133	2.66	39.52
1995	3,384	2,133	2.67	40.69
1994	3,276	2,133	2.67	42.62
1993	3,262	2,133	2.67	42.66
1992	3,191	1,743	2.67	31.38
1991	3,088	1,743	2.68	33.79
1990	3,190	1,743	2.67	31.61

Source: Colorado Division of Local Government

Table 4. Average Annual Percent Population Change: 1980 - 1997

1980 - 1985	1985 - 1990	1990 - 1997	1996 - 1997
1.91%	-1.04%	1.39%	1.80%

Source: Colorado Division of Local Government

Table 5. Costilla County Projected Population: 2000 - 2020

2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
3,626	3,837	4,036	4,179	4,316

Source: Colorado Division of Local Government

Table 6. Costilla County Projected Population Change: 2000 - 2020

2000 - 2005	2005 - 2010	2010 - 2015	2015 - 2020
5.82%	5.19%	3.54%	3.28%

Source: MJ Landers & Associates, Inc.

ECONOMY

The following tables provide a time series of Costilla County's economic trends:

Table 7. Number of Business Establishments in Costilla County

1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
67	69	71	74	75

Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment

Table 8. Number Employed in Costilla County

1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
1,514	1,346	1,379	1,385	1,183

Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment

Table 9. Unemployment Rate in Costilla County

1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
11%	11%	12%	11%	15%

Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment

Table 10. Employment by Sector in Costilla County

Farm	19.9%
Nonfarm	80.1%

Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment

Table 11. Per Capita Income

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Costilla County	\$13,430	\$14,158	\$14,311	\$14,941	\$15,865
Colorado	\$21,069	\$22,236	\$23,101	\$24,478	\$25,696

Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment

Table 12. Persons and Families Below Poverty Level: 1990

Persons Under 18 Yrs	Over 64 Yrs	Families		
Costilla County	35%	50%	21%	28%
Colorado	12%	15%	11%	9%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census

LAND USE

Existing land use is shown on Map 7. Categories mapped include:

- Agricultural.
- Rangeland.
- Forest.
- Tundra.
- Recreational.
- Urban.

Agricultural

Costilla County has over 70,000 acres of irrigated and prime agricultural farmland. Agricultural Resources are discussed in Chapter Two.

Rangeland

The majority of land in Costilla County is rangeland, either vacant or used for dry grazing. Rangeland comprises 47%%, or approximately 372,000 acres of Costilla County.

Forest

Another 39% of Costilla County is covered by forest, almost all of which is on private land. Timber Resources are discussed in Chapter Two.

Tundra

High elevation tundra is found in the Sangre De Cristo range within Costilla County, accounting for over 30,000 acres of land.

Recreational

Regional recreational amenities cover 2000 acres in Costilla County, and include three major reservoirs and town park and recreation facilities. Public lands and trails are very limited in Costilla County. Recreation and Open Lands are identified on Map 8.

Urban

Urban land consists of residential, commercial, and industrial uses.

- 1. Residential. Residential land use principally occurs within Costilla County's thirteen settlements. Some housing is also located in agricultural, rangeland and forest areas.
- 2. Commercial. Commercial uses are contained in Blanca, Fort Garland and San Luis.
- 3. Industrial. Industrial use is limited to the former gold mine site north of San Luis and a small area adjacent to the railroad in Fort Garland.

Zoning

In 1998, Costilla County adopted a Land Use Code and zoned its unincorporated areas. Costilla County has nine zoning districts, two of which are overlay districts (Flood Hazard and Watershed Protection).

County zoning is delineated on Map 9. The majority of land is zoned Agricultural, emphasizing the premise that Costilla County is a rural agricultural county. Most of the County's subdivisions are zoned Estate Residential, allowing minimum lot sizes of less than 35 acres in size. A few subdivisions are zoned Rural Residential, intended for parcels larger than 35 acres in size. Only one site (the Battle Mountain Gold Mine) is currently zoned Industrial. Light Industrial and Commercial Business zoning is provided in the Fort Garland area. San Luis has its own zoning districts and regulations, while Blanca currently does not have zoning.

The new Costilla County Land Use Code divides activities into minor and major permitting processes. Minor Development Permits are required for all new construction, the placement of mobile homes, remodeling or expansion, and installing septic systems. Major Development Permits are required for "any large scale development activity that has the potential to impact the quality of life in Costilla County". These activities include grading, mining and timbering.

Subdivision

Currently, 29 subdivisions with over 37,000 lots are platted on approximately 260,000 acres, or 33%, of the land in Costilla County. 98% of these subdivisions have platted lots that remain vacant (Table 13). Twenty subdivisions are zoned Estate Residential, four are zoned Rural Residential, four are zoned Agricultural, and one is a combination of Estate Residential and Rural Residential. Subdivisions are shown on Map 10.

As noted above, the majority of these subdivisions would allow for minimum lot sizes less than 35 acres in size. Assuming an average density of one unit per five acres for subdivisions in the Estate Residential district, and one unit per 35 acres for subdivisions in the Rural Residential and Agricultural districts, buildout of currently approved subdivisions could potentially add over 45,000 housing units and 118,000 people to Costilla County. In addition, non-subdivided land zoned Agricultural can also potentially be developed into lots at a density of one unit per 35 acres, adding another potential 15,000 units and 39,000 people to the county.

Due to environmental constraints, economic conditions and the lack of services and infrastructure, this level of buildout is extremely unlikely. While the majority of these subdivisions were carved with roads two decades ago, the market has shown almost no demand for development of parcels within these "antiquated" subdivisions.

Table 13. Subdivisions in Costilla County

Subdivision	Number of Platted Lots	Number of Vacant Lots	Percentage Vacant
Forbes Park	3,349	3,188	95%
Sangre de Cristo Ranches	7,788	7,629	98%
San Luis Valley Ranches	9,840	9,735	99%
Mount Blanca Estates	756	755	99%
Trinchera Creek Estates	509	492	97%
Top of the World	568	560	99%
San Luis North Estates	1,061	1,054	99%
Mount Blanca Valley Estates	613	612	99%
Vista Grande Estates	28	28	100%
Valle De Paz	66	66	100%
The Highlands	115	115	100%
Wild Horse Mesa	3,571	3,489	98%
W.E. Adams	240	235	98%
San Luis Estates South*	n/a	n/a	n/a
Rio Grande Ranches	7,245	7,232	99%
Rio Grande River Ranches	268	247	92%

Forbes Wagon Creek Ranches* n/a n/a n/a
Sangre de Cristo Estates 575 573 99%
Sports Valley Estates 559 523 94%
'R' Ranch* n/a n/a n/a
Colorado Equities 38 24 63%
Ewing Ranch South 67 67 100%
Elk Park Ranch 142 141 99%
Elm Estates 17 17 100%
Costilla Creek Ranches* n/a n/a n/a
Reichwein Ranch Estates 13 13 100%
M & M Ranches 34 34 100%
Mountain View 5 5 100%
Reichwein Ranches 7 7 100%
TOTAL 37,474 36,841
* Agricultural Subdivision
Source: Costilla County Assessor's Office

Housing

Seventy-five percent of the housing in Costilla County is single family residences, twenty percent is mobile homes, and the remaining five percent are multifamily units. Table 14 provides a snapshot of median housing costs.

As shown in Table 15, a third of the housing stock is over 50 years old. Most of these older homes are in need of some form of repair, and many are in very poor condition. Propane and wood are the primary heating sources, supplemented by electricity.

Table 14. Median Cost of Single Family Home in Costilla County: 1998

1300 S.F. 1500 S.F. 2000 S.F.
\$41,979 \$48,437 \$64,583
Source: Colorado Division of Housing

Table 15. Age of Housing Stock in Costilla County

Year Constructed # Units
1980 -1989 475
1970 -1979 392
1960 -1969 161
1950 -1959 148
1940 -1949 130
1939 or Earlier 437
Source: U.S. Bureau of Census

DIRECTIONS, POLICIES & ACTIONS

Direction: Protect the character of Costilla County's communities.

Policy LU-01

Costilla County shall protect the existing character its communities.

Action(s):

" Maintain agricultural zoning in Jaroso, Garcia, San Pedro, Los Fuertes, and Viejo San Acacio.

" Create "village center" guidelines, permitting commercial and residential uses to mingle in Chama, San Pablo, Mesita, San Francisco and San Acacio.

Direction: Preserve historic districts, buildings and other structures.

Policy LU-02

Costilla County shall encourage the preservation and renovation of historic structures.

Action(s):

" Work with the Colorado Historical Society and/or others to identify sites for inclusion on the State and National Historic Register, and provide incentives for the renovation of historic building and other structures.

" Update Land Use Code to include provisions that protect historic properties within Costilla County.

Direction: Preserve archeological sites.

Policy LU-03

Costilla County shall encourage the preservation and protection of archeological sites.

Action(s):

" Work with the Colorado Historical Society and/or others to identify archeological sites for protection.

" Update Land Use Code to include provisions that protect archeological resources within Costilla County.

Direction: Diversify the economic base.

Policy LU-04

Costilla County shall strive to diversify the economic base of Costilla County. Eco-tourism, the marketing of arts and crafts, and telecommunication-based businesses shall be promoted. Special effort will be made to attract new businesses that add value to agricultural products. Cottage industries that complement the area's natural and cultural attributes shall also be encouraged.

Action(s):

" Pursue grants for agricultural protection that will help sustain the long-term economic viability of agricultural operations in Costilla County.

" Work with the Colorado Office of Business Development, the Costilla County Economic Development Office and/or others to target, attract and retain businesses that add value to agricultural products.

" In conjunction with the Costilla County Economic Development Office and local agricultural producers, re-introduce canola as a crop.

" Create job training opportunities by attracting alternative building technologies, such as an adobe brick factory.

" Update Land Use Code to specifically allow cottage industry and home-based businesses, and address vested property rights.

Direction: Provide recreational opportunities for all residents and visitors of Costilla County.

Policy LU-05

Costilla County shall improve access to passive and active recreational activities.

Action(s):

" Work with the Great Outdoors Colorado, railroad companies, and/or others to develop a regional trail system that connects communities within Costilla County.

" Work with the Town of San Luis, Town of Blanca, the Fort Garland Revitalization Committee and/or others to construct youth activity facilities and develop youth programs in each community.

" Work with the Town of San Luis, Great Outdoors Colorado, the Nature Conservancy and/or others to protect the Vega Commons as a community open space.

" Work with the Colorado State parks, Great Outdoors Colorado, and/or others develop additional summer and winter recreational facilities, services and programs at Smith, Mountain Home and Sanchez reservoirs.

" Work with the Bureau of Land Management, Great Outdoors Colorado, the Nature Conservancy, the State of New Mexico and/or others to acquire easements and/or purchase key parcels along Rio Grande for public trails and recreation.

Direction: Zone land consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy LU-06

Costilla County shall periodically review and update its Land Use Code and Zoning Map to ensure compatibility with the objectives of the Costilla County Comprehensive Plan.

Action(s):

" Update the Land Use Code to be consistent with the directions and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

" Update the Zoning Map to include all zoned districts.

Direction: Reduce the number of platted subdivision lots within Costilla County.

Policy LU-07

Costilla County shall explore creative measures that would effectively reduce the supply of vacant "antiquated" subdivision lots.

Action(s):

" Explore the implications of a "zero sum" vacant lot policy that would place a moratorium on any new subdivision lots until existing lots are either built upon, consolidated or vacated.

" Adopt resolutions to revoke "antiquated" subdivision plats or vacate their roads.

" Update the Land Use Code to include provisions addressing the amortization of antiquated subdivisions.

Direction: Maintain an adequate supply of housing for all income levels of Costilla County residents.

Policy LU-08

Costilla County recognizes that housing is essential infrastructure. A wide range of housing choices using building materials that are naturally compatible with the local region and culture shall be promoted.

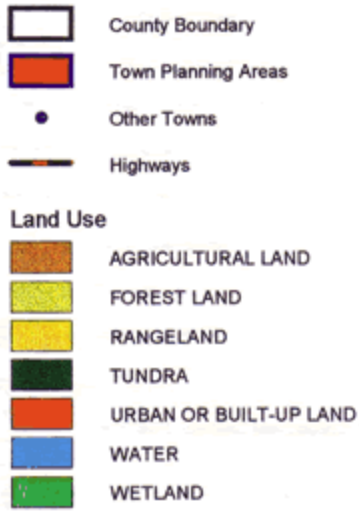
Action(s):

" Work with the Colorado Department of Housing, the San Luis Valley Housing Authority, Habitat for Humanity and/or others to ensure that programs are made available to maintain an adequate supply of affordable housing.

" Work with the Colorado Department of Housing to identify incentives that encourage the maintenance and improvement of existing residential properties.

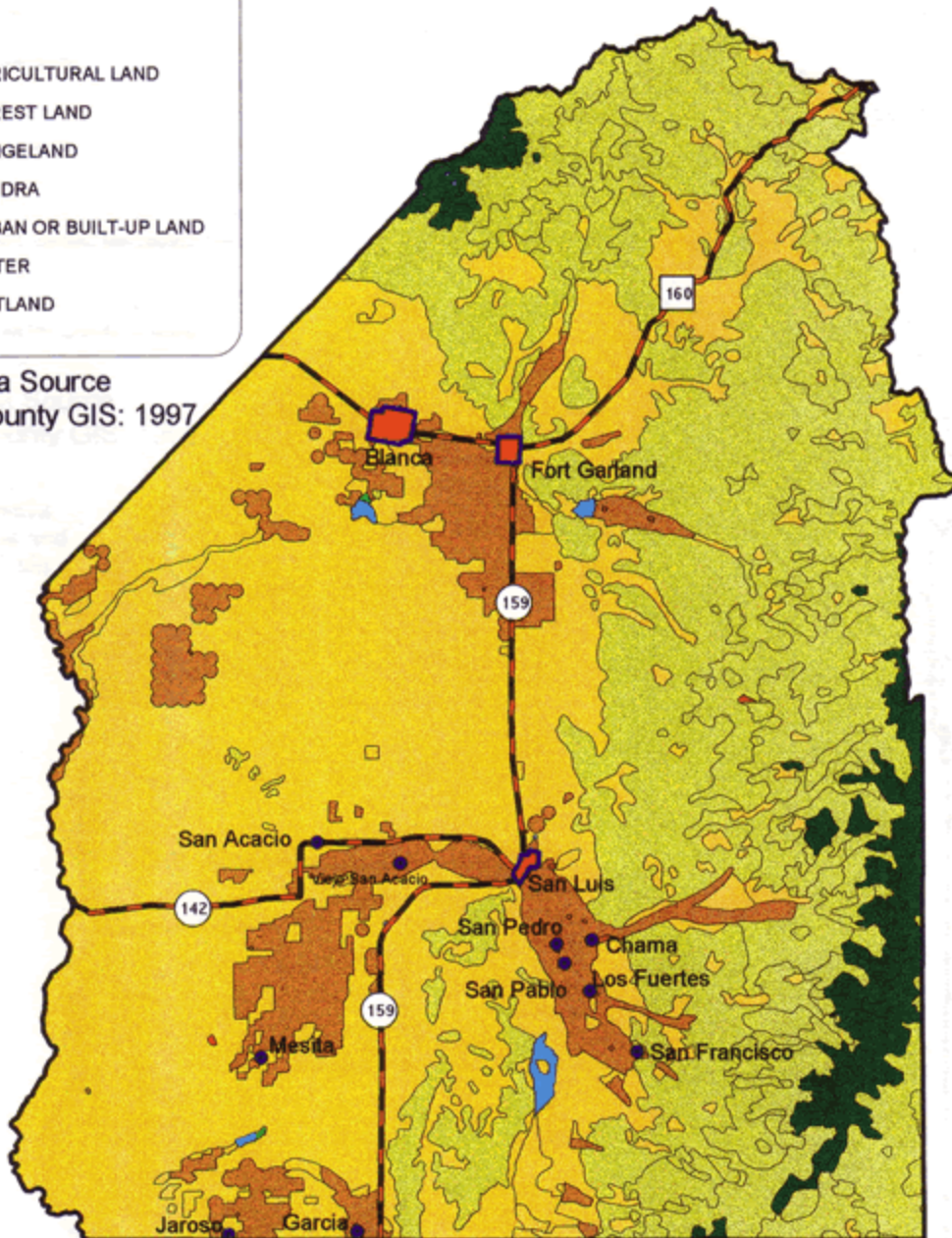
" Work with the Costilla County Economic Development Office and/or others to develop incentives to encourage the manufacture and use of adobe bricks in the construction of new housing.

Map 7 Existing Land Use



Data Source
Costilla County GIS: 1997

Costilla County Comprehensive Plan



Disclaimer

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Costilla County Comprehensive Plan

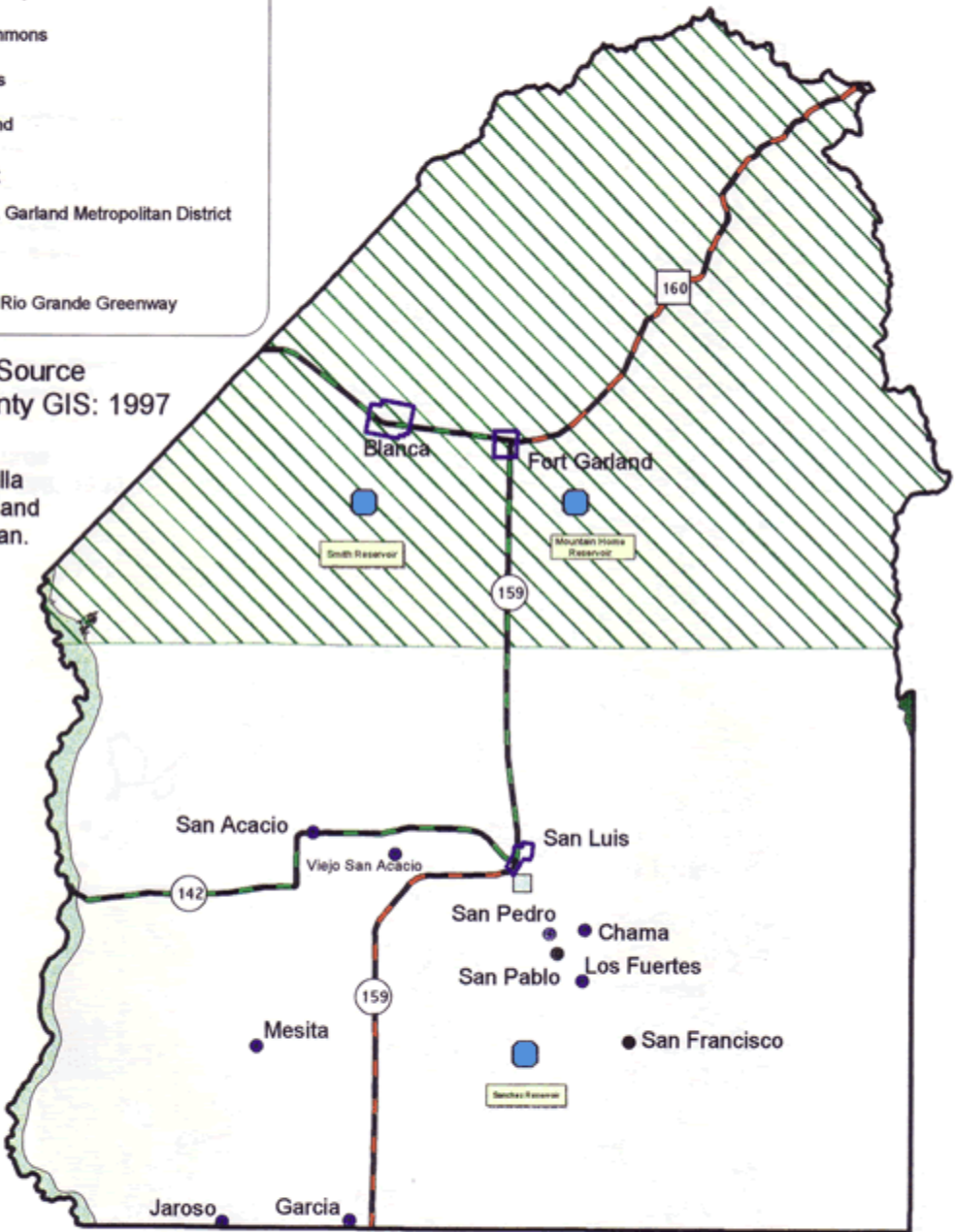
Map 8

Recreation and Open Lands

-  County Boundary
-  Town Planning Areas
-  Other Towns
-  Highways
-  Scenic Byway
-  Vega Commons
-  Reservoirs
-  Public Land
- Recreation District
 -  Blanca/Ft. Garland Metropolitan District
- Trails*
 -  Proposed Rio Grande Greenway

Data Source
Costilla County GIS: 1997

* Refer to Costilla
County Trails and
Recreation Plan.



Disclaimer














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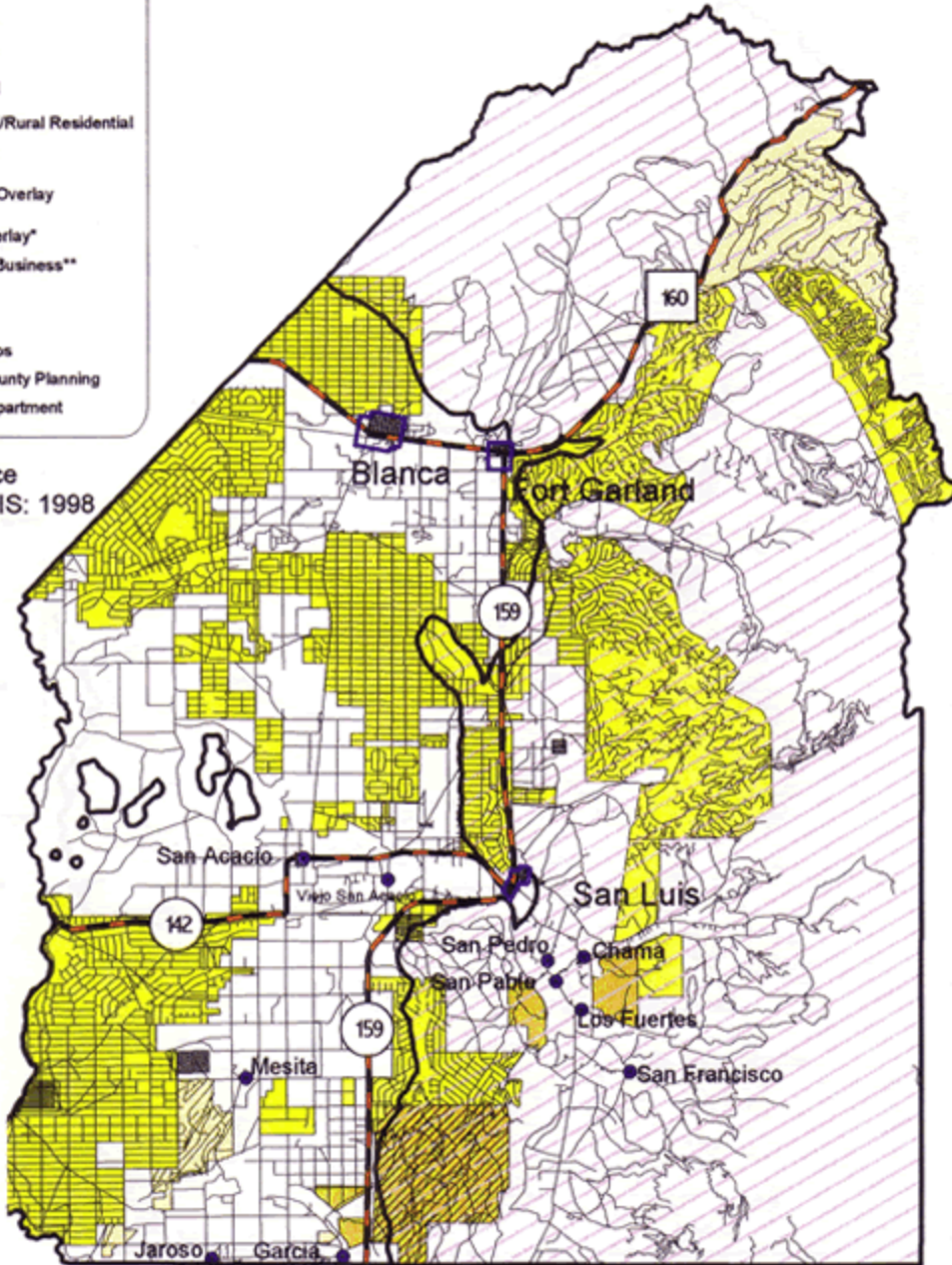
5 0 5 10 Miles

Map 9 Zoning

-  County Boundary
-  Town Planning Areas
-  Other Towns
-  Highways
-  Platted Roads
- Zoning Districts**
 -  Agricultural
 -  Rural Residential
 -  Estate Residential
 -  Estate Residential/Rural Residential
 -  General Industrial
 -  Water Protection Overlay
 -  Flood Hazard Overlay*
 -  Commercial and Business**
 -  Light Industrial**
- * see FEMA maps
- ** see Costilla County Planning and Zoning Department

Costilla County Comprehensive Plan

Data Source
Costilla County GIS: 1998



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5 0 5 10 Miles

Costilla County Comprehensive Plan

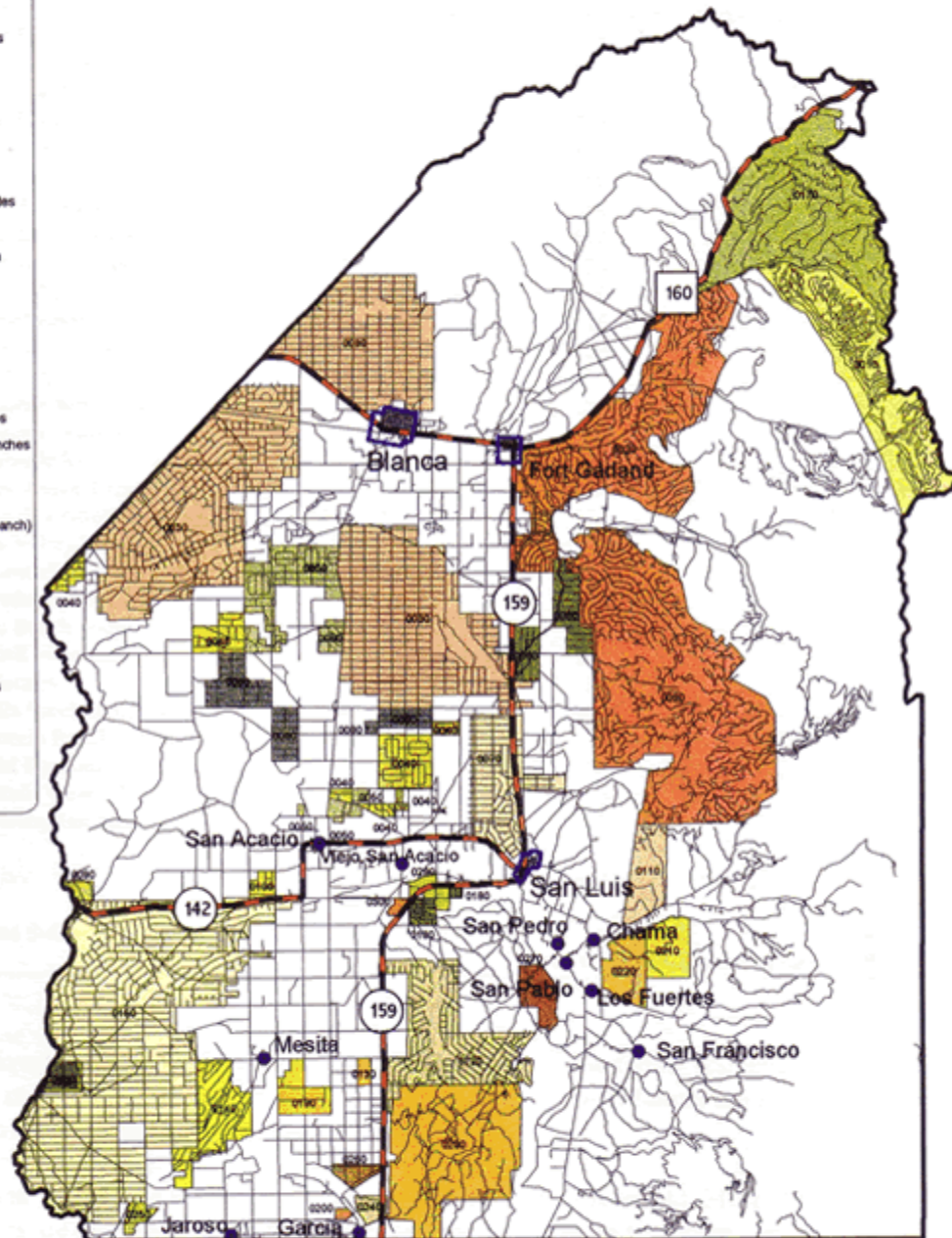
Map 10
Subdivisions

-  County Boundary
-  Town Planning Areas
-  Other Towns
-  Highways
-  Platted Roads

Subdivisions

-  0010 Forbes Park
-  0020 Sangre De Cristo Ranches
-  0030 San Luis Valley Ranches
-  0040 Mount Blanco Estates
-  0060 Trinchera Creek Estates
-  0080 Top of the World
-  0070 San Luis North Estates
-  0080 Mount Blanco Valley Estates
-  0090 Vista Grande Estates
-  0100 Valley De Paz Subdivision
-  0110 The Highlands
-  0120 Wild Horse Mesa
-  0130 W E Adams Subdivision
-  0140 San Luis Estate South
-  0150 Rio Grande Ranches
-  0160 Rio Grande River Ranches
-  0170 Forbes Wagon Creek Ranches
-  0180 Sangre De Cristo Estates
-  0190 Sports Valley Subdivision
-  0200 R' Ranch (AKA Melbey Ranch)
-  0210 Colorado Equities
-  0220 Ewing Ranch South
-  0230 Elk Park Ranch
-  0240 Elm Estates
-  0250 Costilla Creek
-  0260 Reichwein Ranch Estates
-  0270 M & M Ranches
-  0290 Reichwein Ranches
-  0300 Little Norway

Data Source
Costilla County GIS: 1999



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Chapter Four

Public Infrastructure & Services

Introduction

Public infrastructure and services are key determinants of Costilla County's capacity to guide and accommodate future growth. Infrastructure - roads, airports, railroads, and utilities - provide the physical framework for development activities, augmented by county, municipal, special district, and private sector services. An understanding of public infrastructure and services provides guidance as to where future growth may be directed efficiently and cost-effectively.

INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES

Costilla County's infrastructure and services are categorized into three major components: transportation, utilities, and county services.

Transportation

Mobility and circulation in Costilla County is accomplished principally through a regional, county, and local road network. Transit and air services are limited, although an economically important rail line transects the county.

Roads

Costilla County's three regional arterials are State Highway (SH) 160, SH 159, and SH 142. SH 160, classified as a principal arterial by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), transects Costilla County from east to west, linking Fort Garland and Blanca. SH 160 continues east over La Veta Pass to Interstate Highway 25, and west to Alamosa, carrying truck volume in excess of ten percent. SH 160 is the only route permitted by the Colorado State Patrol to transport hazardous materials through Costilla County. According to the June 1999 Draft San Luis Valley 2020 Transportation Plan, geometric and safety improvements are planned for SH 160 along its length within Costilla County.

SH 159 intersects SH 160 at Fort Garland, extending south through San Luis to New Mexico. This particular intersection, which has a poor highway surface condition, has more than 2 accidents per million Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). SH 142 connects with SH 159 at San Luis, extending west to US 285 at Romeo. Accident rates are also high on portions of SH 142 just west of San Luis, and south of San Luis on SH 159, where paved shoulders are less than 4 feet wide. No major improvements are planned by CDOT for either SH 159 or SH 142, both of which are considered minor arterials.

Segments of SH 160, SH 159, and SH 142 are designated as a Scenic and Historic Byway. Known as Los Caminos Antiguos, these roadway segments are eligible for special funding under the federal TEA 21 Transportation Enhancement program. The San Luis Regional Planning Commission recently recommended that the Los Caminos Antiguos be designated as a High Priority Bicycle Route by CDOT, enabling paved shoulder improvements to be funded. The portions of Los Caminos Antiguos within Costilla County are shown on Map 8. State highways, shown on Map 11, are funded by state and federal taxes.

As shown in Table 16, traffic has steadily increased on SH 159 and SH 160 since 1990, with a slight decrease in 1996.

Table 16: Costilla County Annual Average Daily Traffic

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
SH 159							
NM State Line	660	770	620	720	690	690	460
CR 6	660	770	650	750	740	740	490
CR 30	700	820	740	860	850	850	640
CR 54	980	1150	770	890	890	890	700
CR 56	980	1150	1150	1350	1350	1350	1250
San Luis - 1st St.	1100	1300	1500	1750	1700	1700	4600
San Luis - Gaspar St.	2200	2550	4450	5150	5000	4950	4900
San Luis - 4th St.	3050	3500	4100	4750	4650	4600	5000
San Luis - SH 142	3250	3450	4050	4700	4600	4550	4000
San Luis - 6th St.	2850	3050	3550	4100	4050	3950	3250
San Luis - 8th St.	2300	2450	2600	3000	2950	3000	2500
San Luis - 9th St.	1750	1900	1750	2000	1950	2000	2100
CR 82	1750	1650	1650	1900	1800	1950	1900
CR 110	1700	1600	1600	1850	1750	2000	1700
Ft Garland - SH 160	2950	2950	3100	3100	3850	3700	3650

SH 160
Alamosa County/SH 150 3200 3250 3300 3400 3800 3800 3850
CR 43 3300 3350 3300 3500 3950 3900 3950
Blanca - Airport Rd. 3600 3650 3600 4100 4600 4550 4650
Blanca - Broadway 3600 3650 3600 4150 4650 4550 4650
Blanca - DOW Lane 3800 3850 3800 4100 4600 4500 4700
CR 69 3800 3850 3800 3850 4300 4200 4400
CR 75.5 3800 3900 3850 4900 5500 5400 5650
Ft. Garland - SH 159 2950 2950 3100 3100 3850 3700 3650
CR 366 2800 2800 2550 2950 3650 3350 3400
CR 127 2650 2700 2450 2650 3300 3100 3200
Source: Colorado Department of Transportation

County roads provide local access to Costilla County's vast unincorporated areas. The majority of the county roads are unpaved, with conditions ranging from good to poor. Many county roads, platted and constructed in the early 1970's to serve subdivisions which were never developed, are not maintained due to their lack of use. County road construction and maintenance is principally funded by county taxes. Three county shops - in Fort Garland, San Luis and Mesita - house road maintenance equipment and personnel. Blanca and San Luis each maintain local roads within their communities. County roads are shown on Map 11.

Table 17 indicates that the majority of Costilla County residents work within a relatively short distance of where they live. Approximately five percent of Costilla County residents work at home, 75 percent work within the county, 13 percent commute out-of-county (primarily to Alamosa, the employment center of the San Luis Valley), and six percent travel to New Mexico for employment. The majority of these trips are in a single occupant vehicle, with approximately 20 percent of the workforce carpooling and another five percent walking or bicycling to work.

Table 17: Commuting Time in Costilla County

Time	Workforce	Time	Workforce
Less then 5 minutes	11%	30 to 34 minutes	18%
5 to 9 minutes	23%	35 to 39 minutes	1%
10 to 14 minutes	12%	40 to 44 minutes	2%
15 to 19 minutes	8%	45 to 59 minutes	3%
20 to 24 minutes	9%	60 to 89 minutes	5%
25 to 29 minutes	2%	More then 90 minutes	1%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census

Transit

Inter-city bus service is provided by TNM&O, with stops along US 160 in Blanca and Fort Garland. Twin Hearts Express shuttle service operates between Costilla County and Albuquerque, New Mexico. The Costilla County Senior Citizens, based in San Luis, provides transportation for nutritional, social, and recreational purposes.

Airport

Costilla County currently has only one operating airport, a general aviation field located southwest of Blanca. The Blanca airport has one dirt runway, lighted with navigational aids. Commercial air service is available in Alamosa at the San Luis Valley Regional Airport.

Rail

The Union Pacific Railroad transects Costilla County, roughly following the same east-west alignment as SH 160 until veering southeast over the Sangre De Cristo Range. Two trains a day haul minerals, timber, and agricultural products from the San Luis Valley. A one-mile spur of the Southern San Luis Valley Railroad extends south of Blanca, which discontinued service in 1995.

Utilities

Utilities in Costilla County consist of water systems, wastewater systems, and energy providers. Solid waste disposal and the availability of telecommunications are also important utility issues.

Water

Three irrigation districts exist in Costilla County: the Trinchera Water Conservancy District, the Sanchez Ditch and Reservoir Company, and the Costilla County Water Conservancy District. Agricultural water supply and the protection of the acequia ditch system are discussed in Chapter Two. Water quality is also discussed in Chapter Two.

Potable water is provided by individual and central well systems. Costilla County maintains four distribution systems; one each in San Acacio, Chama, Los Fuertes and San Francisco. The Fort Garland Water and

Sanitation District, Town of Blanca, and Town of San Luis also provide central water systems that store and distribute water to their communities. All of these systems pump water from a central well into a storage tank, where it is distributed through a series of mains ranging in size from 2 ½ inch to 6 inches in diameter. Only the Chama and San Luis systems are chlorinated, while the others have received waiver from treatment.

Sanitary Sewer

Fort Garland, Blanca and San Luis have central sewer systems that collect and treat wastewater. These systems are typically comprised of 8 inch diameter mains that gravity flow to aerated lagoons. The remainder of Costilla County is served by septic systems. As identified in Chapter Two, certain areas within the county have soils that are undesirable for conventional leach fields. Soils with low permeability, or areas with near-surface groundwater levels and gravelly soils, pose problems for the siting of septic systems.

Energy Providers

Public Service Company of Colorado, the San Luis Valley REA, and the San Isabel REA provide electric service to portions of Costilla County. Public Service Company of Colorado serves Fort Garland, San Luis and the eastern portions of Costilla County. The San Luis Valley REA provides service in the western portions of the county, generally following established roadways south of Blanca to San Acacio, Mesita and Jaroso. The San Isabel REA serves small areas on the eastern edge of Costilla County. Costilla County is not served by natural gas, and those not served by electricity must use propane, wood, coal or solar energy for heating.

Solid Waste

Solid waste is served by GT's Rubbish Removal, a private provider. With no landfill currently in Costilla County, trash is hauled to the San Luis Valley Regional Landfill in Del Norte. A landfill located within Costilla County is a high priority, as transfer stations are underutilized and illegal dumping is on the increase. A landfill site centrally located south of SH 160, west of SH 159, and north of SH 142, is currently under consideration.

Telecommunications

Costilla County currently has the capability to carry high volume telecommunications via a fiber-optic line that lies within the SH 160 right-of-way. The County is also a beta site for switching capabilities. Internet services are available from Blanca Telephone Company and other ISDN providers.

County Services

Costilla County government services include general administration, public welfare, road maintenance and law enforcement. The County also operates a public library in San Luis, and two school districts educate youth. Emergency services include fire protection and medical ambulance.

Administration

County government administration facilities are currently centrally located in San Luis, the county seat. However, these offices are in several buildings of generally poor condition. The Old Courthouse, which houses the majority of the administrative offices, recently received a restoration grant from the Colorado Historical Society.

A new administration complex is proposed on a 40 acre site three miles north of San Luis. If built, the Costilla County Civic Center will have offices for the administrator, assessor, treasurer and clerk and recorder, and contain the health, social services, and planning and zoning departments. Separate buildings within the new complex will house the road and bridge shop, sheriff's department, courts and jail. Due to state requirements to locate county administration facilities within the county seat, the site must be annexed to the Town of San Luis. With the construction of the Costilla County Civic Center, the Old Courthouse would be converted to an archive center.

Law Enforcement

The Costilla County Sheriff's Office provides law enforcement services within the unincorporated areas of Costilla County. As of August 1., 1999, San Luis is contracting law enforcement services with the Sheriff's Office. The Town of Blanca has a police department separate from the Sheriff's Office. In addition, the Colorado State Patrol enforces traffic laws on SH 159 and 160.

Emergency Services

The Costilla County Fire Protection District provides volunteer fire protection within Costilla County. Fire stations are located in San Luis and Fort Garland. The Town of Blanca has a fire department separate from the Costilla County Fire Protection District. Emergency medical service is provided by the Costilla County Ambulance District. Ambulance barns are located in San Luis and Blanca.

Education

Costilla County is almost evenly split into two school districts. The Sierra Grande R-30 School District is located in the northern half of Costilla County, with its facilities located in the Fort Garland area. The Centennial R-1 District is located in the southern portion of the county, with facilities in San Luis. School enrollment figures (Table 18) depict a decline in the number of students, after a peak in 1996.

Table 18. School Enrollment in Costilla County

1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Centennial R-1	388	393	400	390
Sierra Grande R-30	326	351	370	363
Source: Colorado Department of Education				

Costilla County does not have any adult education facilities, although Adams State College and the San Luis Valley Voc-Tech Center are located in nearby Alamosa. The nearest community college is Trinidad State Junior College in Trinidad.

Funding Sources

The County pays for infrastructure and services from the General Fund. Revenues for the General Fund are derived principally from property taxes. Tables 19 and 20 provide a snapshot of County property assessments and real property revenue sources.

Table 19: 1998 Costilla County Property Tax Levies

General Fund	15.158	School District R-30	48.201
Public Welfare	2.725	Fort Garland Metropolitan District	5.275
Road and Bridge	.230	Fort Garland Sanitation District	7.884
Library Fund	.500	Town of Blanca	15.833
Fire Protection District	1.560	School District R-1	28.469
Ambulance District	2.500	Town of San Luis	25.323
Trinchera Water Conservancy Dist.	3.198		
Source: Costilla County Assessor's Office			

Table 20: 1998 Costilla County Property Tax Assessments

Residential
Mobile Homes \$ 627,090
Improvements \$ 3,992,320
Improved Land \$ 424,330
Platted or Unplatted Lands \$40,898,260
Total Residential \$45,942,000
Commercial
Improvements \$ 1,387,200
Platted or Unplatted Lands \$ 228,040
Total Commercial \$ 1,615,240
Industrial
Improvements \$ 146,790
Platted or Unplatted Lands \$ 563,180
Total Industrial \$ 709,970
Agricultural
Sprinkler Irrigated \$ 1,434,710
Flood Irrigated \$ 1,151,830
Meadow \$ 371,530
Dry Grazing \$ 738,270
Dry Grazing \$ 433,610
Irrigated Grazing \$ 1,081,420
Improvements \$ 1,330,660
Total Agricultural \$ 6,542,030
Mining and Minerals
Mineral Reserves \$ 342,080
Producing Mines \$ 0
Total Mining \$ 342,080
TOTAL REAL PROPERTY \$55,151,320
Source: Costilla County Assessor's Office

DIRECTIONS, POLICIES & ACTIONS

Direction: Provide a safe, reliable and cost-effective County road system.

Policy PIS-01

The County shall maintain and improve its road system. Land developers shall be required to pay a fair share of the costs associated with new roads.

Action(s):

" Prepare, adopt and update annually a Capital Improvement Program, and pursue Energy Impact Assistance Grants for county road improvements.

" Vacate County roads that are unused and are not necessary for access and/or circulation.

" Prepare and adopt street design and construction standards.

" Update Land Use Code to require that new streets, public or private, be constructed by the subdivider/developer to conform with adopted standards.

" Explore alternate transportation routes or bypasses for traffic around the "village centers" of Chama, San Pedro, San Pablo, Los Fuertes and San Francisco.

Direction: Improve safety and travel conditions on State highways.

Policy PIS-02

The County shall coordinate State Transportation Improvement Planning with the Colorado Department of Transportation and other county jurisdictions within the San Luis Valley Transportation Planning Region.

" Prepare a comprehensive transportation study specific to Costilla County to assist with funding decisions and priorities for highway improvements and road maintenance.

" Work with the Colorado Department of Transportation, the Costilla County Economic Development Office and/or others to pursue grant funding through the federal TEA 21 Transportation Enhancement Program for improvements to the Los Antiguos Caminos Scenic Byway.

Direction: Support development of alternative modes of travel.

Policy PIS-03

The County shall promote the use of buses, vans and carpools to transport commuters to employment centers and job sites.

Policy PIS-04

The County shall coordinate access to transit for the developmentally disabled with and/or other transit providers.

Action(s):

" Work with the San Luis Valley Community Connections, the Costilla County Economic Development Office, Blue Peaks Developmental Services and/or others to pursue grant funding to subsidize transit services to and from Alamosa, Pueblo, Taos and Albuquerque.

Direction: Improve the availability of air transportation.

Policy PIS-05

The development of a regional airport shall be encouraged to promote access and economic opportunities within Costilla County.

Action(s):

" Work with the Federal Aviation Administration, the Costilla County Economic Development Office and/or others to prepare economic studies and pursue the planning of a regional Costilla County Airport.

Direction: Protect and enhance the long-term viability of rail transportation .

Policy PIS-06

The expansion of the rail system shall be promoted, and the abandonment of any rail lines important to agricultural markets shall be strongly discouraged.

Action(s):

" Work with the Union Pacific Railroad, the Costilla County Economic Development Office and/or others to explore the expansion of the rail system to southern Costilla County.

Direction: Ensure the protection of public health through the provision of safe drinking water systems which also adequately meet fire protection requirements.

Policy PIS-07

The County shall maintain and improve its drinking water system. Installation of community systems where none currently exist shall be a priority, followed by improving water treatment.

Policy PIS-08

All land development shall be required to provide evidence of a water supply that is of adequate quality, quantity, pressure and dependability to support the intended use and provide fire protection. Land developers shall be required to pay a fair share of water system costs.

" Prepare, adopt and update annually a Capital Improvement Program, and pursue Energy Impact Assistance Grants for community water system improvements.

" Prepare and adopt standards for water system design and construction.

" Update Land Use Code to require that new water systems be constructed by the subdivider/developer to conform with adopted standards.

Direction: Ensure the protection of public health through the provision of adequate wastewater disposal and treatment systems.

Policy PIS-09

Public sanitary sewer systems shall be extended to serve all new development. All land development shall be required to provide evidence of adequate wastewater collection, treatment and disposal, with suitable capacity, quality of discharge, suitable point of discharge and dependability. Where the extension of a public sanitary sewer system is not technically feasible to serve development, the use of properly engineering leach fields and/or package plants shall be considered on a case by case basis. Land developers shall be required to pay a fair share of sanitary sewer system and/or other wastewater collection, treatment and disposal costs.

Action(s):

" Prepare and adopt standards for sanitary sewer, wastewater package plant and septic system design and construction.

" Update Land Use Code to require that new wastewater systems be constructed by the subdivider/developer to conform with adopted standards.

Direction: Provide a diverse range of energy resources.

Policy PIS-09

The County shall promote the extension and/or development of a diverse range of energy supplies, especially natural gas, to supplement existing renewable and non-renewable resources.

Action(s):

" Work with Public Service Company, the San Luis Valley Rural Electric Association, the San Isabel Rural Electric Association, the Costilla County Economic Development Office and/or others to explore the extension of natural gas lines into Costilla County.

" Work with the Department of Energy, the Solar Energy Research Institute, Public Service Company, the San Luis Valley Rural Electric Association, the Costilla County Economic Development Office and/or others to explore the funding and expansion of passive and active solar energy applications throughout Costilla County.

Direction: Provide adequate solid waste facilities within Costilla County.

Policy PIS-010

The County shall encourage the development of a landfill site within Costilla County. The selected landfill site shall be designed to be compatible with adjacent land uses, and buffered from roadway views.

Policy PIS-011

Recycling of glass, aluminum, paper, plastic and other waste materials shall be encouraged to reduce landfill waste and protect environmental resources.

Action(s):

" Work with GT Rubbish Removal, the Costilla County Economic Development Office and/or others to create a public-private partnership for the development and operation of a solid waste landfill to serve Costilla County.

" Work with GT Rubbish Removal and/or others to develop local and regional markets for the recycling of waste materials.

Direction: Develop telecommunications infrastructure.

Policy PIS-012

The County shall promote access to, and expansion of, telecommunication opportunities.

Action(s):

" Work with the Federal Communications Commission, the Colorado Public Utilities Commission, CATI, US West, the Blanca Telephone Company, the Costilla County Economic Development Office and/or others to expand and market the capabilities of telecommunication infrastructure within Costilla County.

Direction: Consolidate administrative, law enforcement, judicial and other county government services.

Policy PIS-013

The County shall endeavor to operate cost-effectively and efficiently, and to provide governmental services for its citizens and public employees in a safe environment.

Action(s):






" Work with San Luis, the Colorado Department of Local Affairs and/or others to locate, fund, design and construct a consolidated county government center.

Direction: Provide infrastructure and services consistent with the Plan Direction.

Policy PIS-014

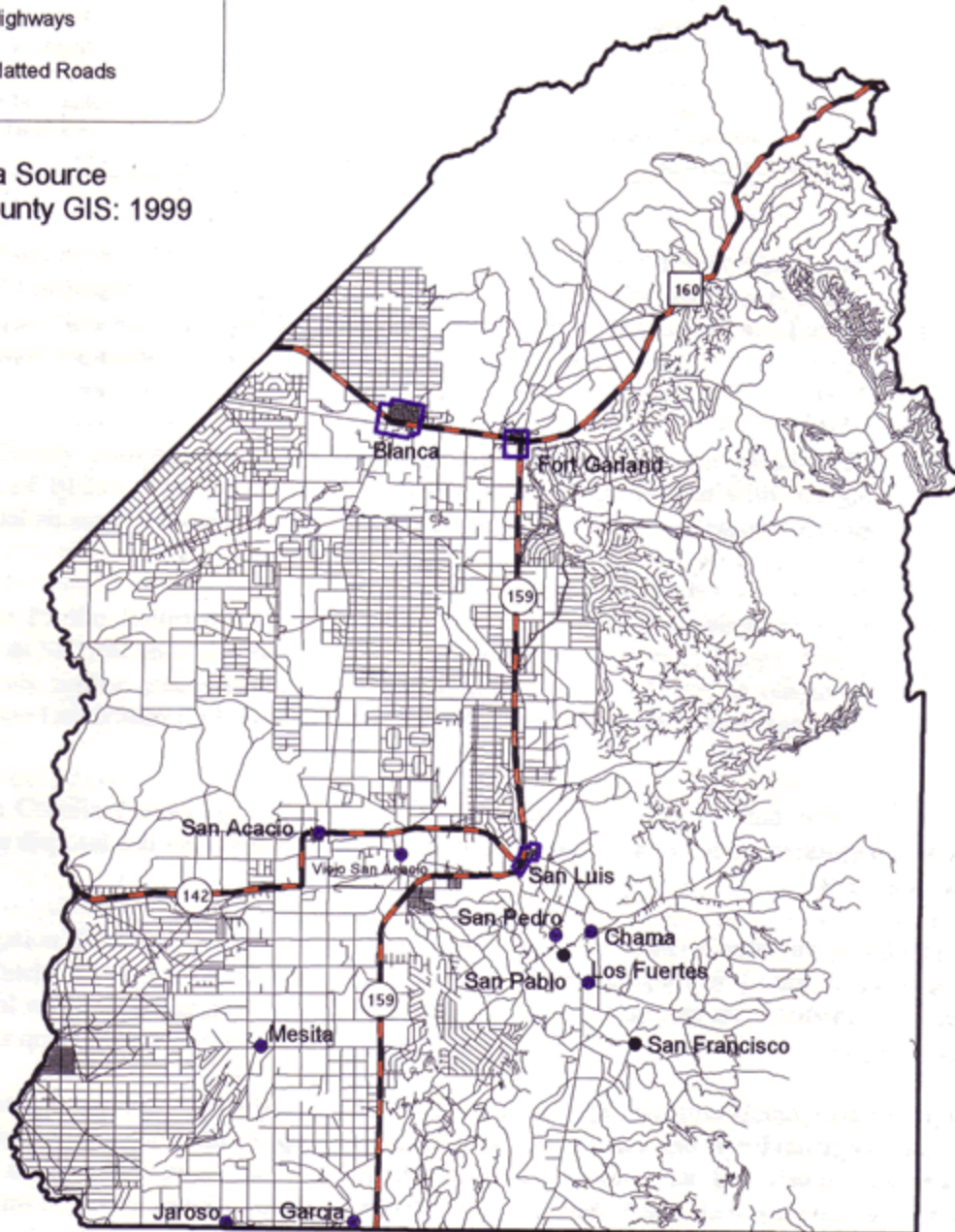
The County shall ensure that the provision and/or extension of infrastructure and services are consistent with environmental, land use and growth management objectives of the Plan. Infrastructure and services shall be constrained to areas of existing development, and areas suitable for development, per the Plan Direction.

Map 11 Roads

-  County Boundary
-  Town Planning Areas
-  Other Towns
-  Highways
-  Platted Roads

Data Source
Costilla County GIS: 1999

Costilla County Comprehensive Plan




Disclaimer

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5 0 5 10 Miles



Chapter Five

Growth Management

Introduction

The Plan Direction should be used in conjunction with the policies found in each Chapter to manage growth in Costilla County. While the Plan Direction is not regulatory, any changes to the Costilla County Zoning Map should be consistent with the Plan Direction.

PLAN DIRECTION

The guiding concept of the Plan Direction, as co-authored with the Costilla County Planning and Zoning Department, is "to safeguard our natural and cultural resources, preserve our local identity, and stimulate healthy economies through managed growth." The Plan Direction is contained on Map 12.

Growth management categories include:

- Established Community Areas
- Cooperative Planning Areas
- Rural Resource Areas
- Rural Conservation Areas

Established Community Areas

Established Community Areas are defined as existing towns, including San Luis, Blanca, Fort Garland, San Acacio, Viejo San Acacio, Mesita, Jaroso, Garcia, San Pedro, San Pablo, Chama, Los Fuertes, and San Francisco.

Cooperative Planning Areas

Cooperative Planning Areas are defined as areas for potential new growth surrounding the existing incorporated towns of San Luis and Blanca, and the unincorporated town of Fort Garland.

Rural Resource Areas

Rural Resource Areas are defined as areas outside of growth opportunity areas that support agricultural, low density residential, and other rural land uses.

Rural Conservation Areas

Rural Conservation Areas are defined as public lands, and areas with: steep slopes, geologic or wildfire hazards, water bodies, major wetlands, floodplains, and/or very high potential wildlife impacts.

SUB-AREA PLANS

Blanca

The Blanca Sub-Area Plan is contained on Map 13.

Fort Garland

The Fort Garland Sub-Area Plan is contained on Map 14.

San Luis

The San Luis Sub-Area Plan is contained on Map 15.

THREE-MILE AREA PLAN

A "three-mile area plan" is prepared for Blanca and San Luis for the purposes of meeting Colorado Revised Statute 31-12-105 (e) concerning annexations. Colorado Revised Statute 31-12-105 (e) is as follows:

A...no annexation may take place which would have the effect of extending a municipal boundary more than three miles in any direction from any point of such municipal boundary in any one year...Prior to completion of any annexation within the three-mile area, the municipality shall have in place a plan for that area, which generally describes the proposed location, character, and extent of streets, subways, bridges, waterways, waterfronts, parkways, playgrounds, squares, parks, aviation fields, other public ways, grounds, open spaces, public utilities, and terminals for water, light, sanitation, transportation, and power to be provided by the municipality and the proposed land uses for the area...@

The Three-Mile Area Plan is contained on Map 16.

DIRECTIONS, POLICIES & ACTIONS

Direction: Establish Four Planning Areas (Established Community Areas, Cooperative Planning Areas, Rural Resource Areas and Rural Conservation Areas).

Policy GM-01

Growth shall be managed in Costilla County. The County shall reinforce its historic rural agricultural development patterns, directing new growth into Established Community Areas. Compatible in-fill of existing vacant land in Established Community Areas shall be a priority of all development activity.

Policy GM-02

Public infrastructure and services shall be extended to Cooperative Planning Areas from Established Community Areas. New development in Cooperative Planning Areas shall be phased to be contiguous with Established Community Areas. Flagpole annexations shall be discouraged.

Policy GM-03

Rural residential and agricultural development shall be preferred in Rural Resource Areas. Efforts to reduce the platted density within Rural Resource Areas shall be encouraged. Urban levels of development shall be discouraged in Rural Resource Areas.

Policy GM-04

The environmental integrity of Rural Conservation Areas shall be preserved, with most development activity directed away from these areas. Existing platted rural residential subdivisions in Rural Conservation Areas are encouraged to develop with a sensitivity to environmental conditions.

Action(s):

" Work with the Town of San Luis, Town of Blanca, the Fort Garland Revitalization Committee, the Costilla County Economic Development Office and/or others to encourage urban growth to occur with Established Community Areas, as appropriate.

" Work with the residents of the unincorporated Established Community Areas of Jarosa, Garcia, Mesita, San Acacio, Viejo San Acacio, Chama, San Pedro, San Pablo, Los Fuertes and San Francisco to ensure that all new growth is consistent with their rural character.

" Create a sub-area regional plan for the Established Community Areas of Chama, San Pedro, San Pablo, Los Fuertes and San Francisco that addresses the preservation of their cultural landscape.

" Upgrade existing roads and utilities to direct growth in Cooperative Planning Areas.

" Maintain open land separation in the Cooperative Planning Area between Blanca and Fort Garland to retain the identity of each community.

" Create a "transfer of development rights" program that shifts density from existing subdivided lots in Rural Resource Areas to new subdivisions in Cooperative Planning Areas.

" Update Land Use Code to include provisions restricting the use of mercury vapor lighting in the Rural Conservation and Rural Resource Areas, and requiring new development in the Established Community and Cooperative Planning Areas to install properly designed, fully-shielded, energy-efficient lighting.

Direction: Cooperate on planning activities of mutual concern with the incorporated municipalities of Blanca and San Luis.

Policy GM-05

The County shall coordinate the policies within the Comprehensive Plan with the land use policies and regulations of the towns of Blanca and San Luis.

Action(s):

" Establish an agreement between Costilla County, San Luis and Blanca to cooperate on land use planning and other matters of mutual regional interest.

Direction: Coordinate the implementation of a Sub-Area Plan for Blanca.

Policy GM-06

The County shall coordinate its planning activities with the Town of Blanca.

Action(s):

" Work with the Colorado Department of Transportation, Colorado Division of Local Government, Town of Blanca, the Costilla County Economic Development Office, local property owners and/or others to improve US

Highway 160 corridor through Blanca with landscaping, lighting and other roadway improvements to stimulate revitalization of commercial district.

" Target new residential growth to vacant lots in Blanca.

" Support the Town of Blanca in the pursuit of an Energy Impact Assistance Grant and/or other funding to prepare a comprehensive community plan.

" Assist the Town of Blanca with the preparation of zoning regulations.

Direction: Coordinate the implementation of a Sub-Area Plan for Fort Garland.

Policy GM-07

The County shall coordinate its planning activities with Fort Garland.

Action(s):

" Work with the Fort Garland Revitalization Committee, the Costilla County Economic Development Office, local property owners and/or others to improve Fort Garland as a "gateway community" with landscaped entry signage, a visitor's center, pedestrian connections, and other amenities that could attract tourism.

" Establish separate residential and commercial zoning districts in Fort Garland.

" Work with the Fort Garland Revitalization Committee, the Costilla County Economic Development Office, local property owners and/or others to explore the issue of Fort Garland incorporating as a local government.

Direction: Coordinate the implementation of a Sub-Area Plan for San Luis.

Policy GM-08

The County shall coordinate its planning activities with the Town of San Luis.

Action(s):

" Work with the Colorado Department of Transportation, Colorado Division of Local Government, Town of San Luis, the Costilla County Economic Development Office, local property owners and/or others to improve Main Street in San Luis with landscaping, lighting and other roadway improvements to stimulate revitalization of commercial district.

" Support the Town of San Luis in the pursuit of an Energy Impact Assistance Grant and/or other funding to prepare a comprehensive community plan.

" Create design standards to protect the integrity of the historic district within San Luis.

" Restore Rito Seco through San Luis, with trail loop and "riverfront" revitalization.

Map 12 PLAN DIRECTION



Costilla County Comprehensive Plan

Upgrade regulations that require new rural residential subdivisions to maintain the integrity of the acequia ditch system.

Improve US Highway 160 through Blanca with landscaping, lighting and roadway improvements to stimulate revitalization of commercial district.

Adopt zoning regulations to guide the use of land within Blanca.

Create regulations that restrict development within the Floodplain Hazard Overlay District to maintain public safety and protect the integrity of riparian corridors.

Create regulations that require new rural residential subdivisions to maintain the integrity of the acequia ditch system.

Create a "land preservation subdivision" process for new subdivisions that "clusters" rural residential development to preserve existing agricultural uses and protect views.

Diversify agricultural operations by introducing canola as a crop.

Ensure the economic viability of agricultural uses by protecting prime agricultural land from development.

Provide incentives for consolidation of existing residential subdivision lots to achieve lower density rural residential development.

Adopt regulations to revoke "antiquated" subdivision plats, or vacate their un-used roads.

Acquire easements and/or purchase key parcels along Rio Grande for public trails and recreation.

Create a "transfer of development rights" program that shifts density from existing subdivided lots in rural resource areas to new subdivisions.

Maintain open land separation between Blanca and Fort Garland to retain the identity of each community, protect a significant wildlife corridor, and preserve Mt. Blanca views.

Protect scenic views with design guidelines that screen roadcuts and structures.

Improve Fort Garland as a "gateway community" with landscaped entry signage, a visitor's center, pedestrian connections, and other amenities that could attract tourism.

Establish separate residential and commercial zoning districts in Fort Garland.

Create jobs by adding value to local agricultural products, e.g. manufacturing canola oil.

Develop additional summer and winter recreation facilities, services and programs at Smith Reservoir, Sanchez Reservoir, and Mountain Home Reservoir.

Improve Main Street in San Luis with landscaping, lighting and roadway improvements to stimulate revitalization of commercial district.

Create design standards to protect the integrity of the historic district within San Luis.

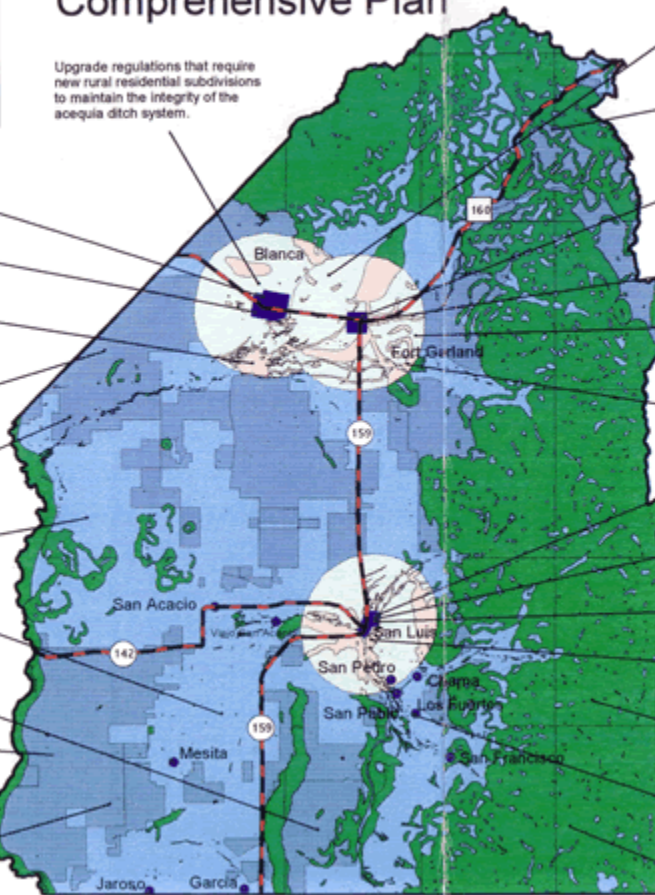
Restore Rito Seco through San Luis, with trail loop and "riverfront" revitalization.

Protect Vega Commons as a community open space.

Create regulations that restrict logging and overgrazing within the Watershed Protection Overlay District to maintain the integrity of the acequia ditch system.

Protect existing rural character of Jaroso, Garcia, San Pedro, Los Fuertes, and Viejo San Acacio by maintaining agricultural zoning.

Expand environmental protection by creating a new "overlay" district that restricts land development in areas with steep slopes, geologic and wildfire hazards, and wildlife impacts.



Appendix Three

Project Bibliography

PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

<u>Publications/Plans/Articles</u>	<u>Date</u>
Costilla County Abstract of Assessment and Tax Levies	1997
Costilla County Real Estate Abstract by Land Use Code	1/1999
Costilla County Subdivision Parcel Count	1/1999
Population and Housing Unit Counts	1940 - 1990
Estimates of the Population of Places: Annual Time Series	1991 - 1997
General Profile for Costilla County, Colorado	1990
General Profile for San Luis, Colorado	1990
General Profile for Blanca, Colorado	1990
CDEIS Community Profile for San Luis, Colorado	1997
CDEIS Community Profile for Blanca, Colorado	1997
CDEIS Population Projections	1995 - 2020
CDEIS Colorado County Profile	1994 - 1997
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CDEIS County and Municipal Finance	1994 - 1997
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San Luis Valley COG Regional Comprehensive Plan, Vols. I/II	1974
Preliminary Land Use Plan – San Luis Valley	1973
Comprehensive Plan for Costilla County - San Luis - Blanca	1978
Draft Comprehensive Plan for San Luis	1989
Costilla County Land Use Codes	1998
Town of San Luis Zoning Ordinances	1995
Architecture Site Summary Report	1998
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Costilla County Zoning Maps	1998
Costilla County Subdivisions	1998
Costilla County Land Use and Natural Plant Communities	1976
Costilla County General Soil Map	1972
Flood Insurance Rate Maps	1991
DOW Composite Map of Significant Wildlife Habitat, Costilla County, Colorado	1998

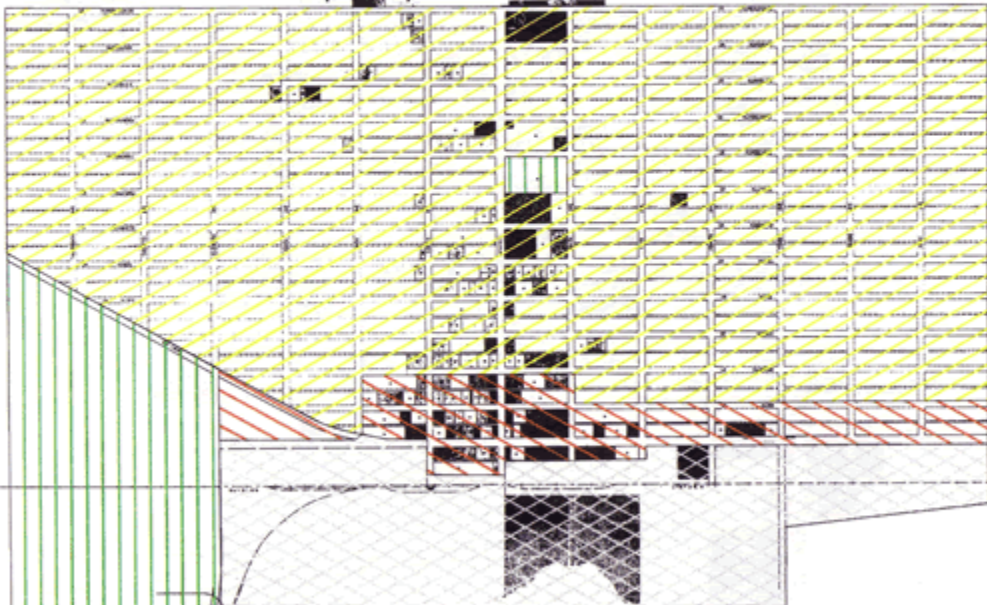
Costilla County Comprehensive Plan

Map 13
Sub-Area Plan

Town of Blanca



Data Source
Costilla County: 1999



Plan Direction Components:

- Improve US Highway 160 through Blanca with landscaping, lighting and roadway improvements to stimulate revitalization of commercial district.
- Adopt zoning regulations to guide the use of land within Blanca.

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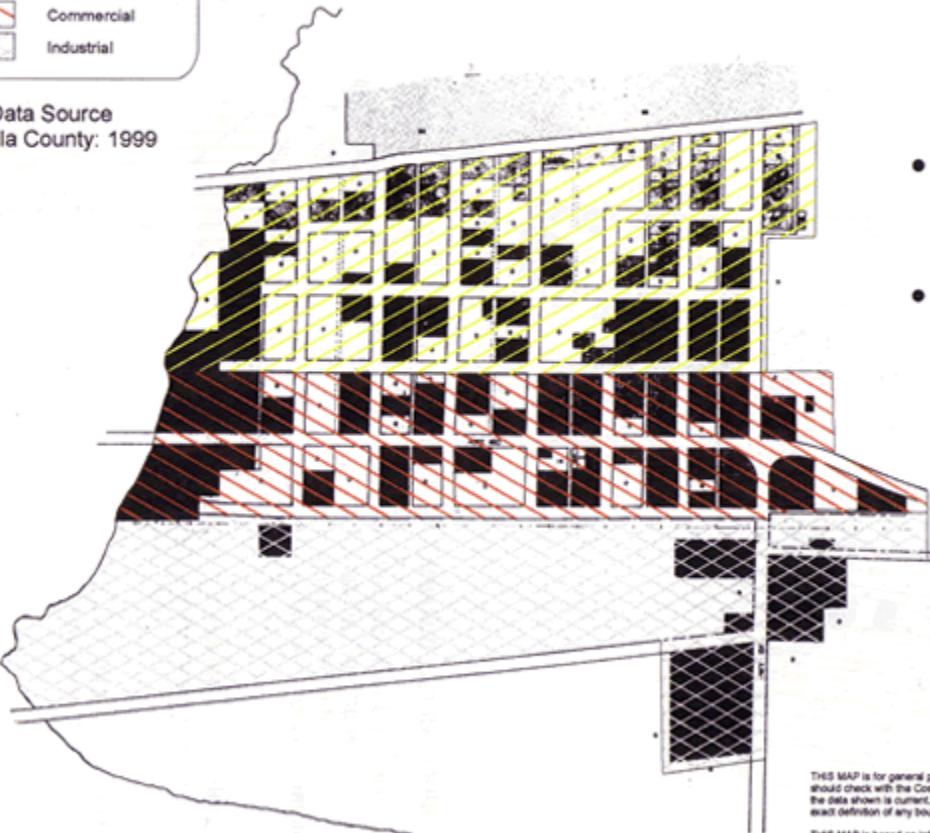
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Map 14
Sub-Area Plan

Town of Fort Garland



Data Source
Costilla County: 1999



Plan Direction Components:

- Improve Fort Garland as a "gateway community" with landscaped entry signage, a visitor's center, pedestrian connections, and other amenities that could attract tourism.
- Establish separate residential and commercial zoning districts in Fort Garland.

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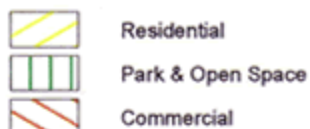


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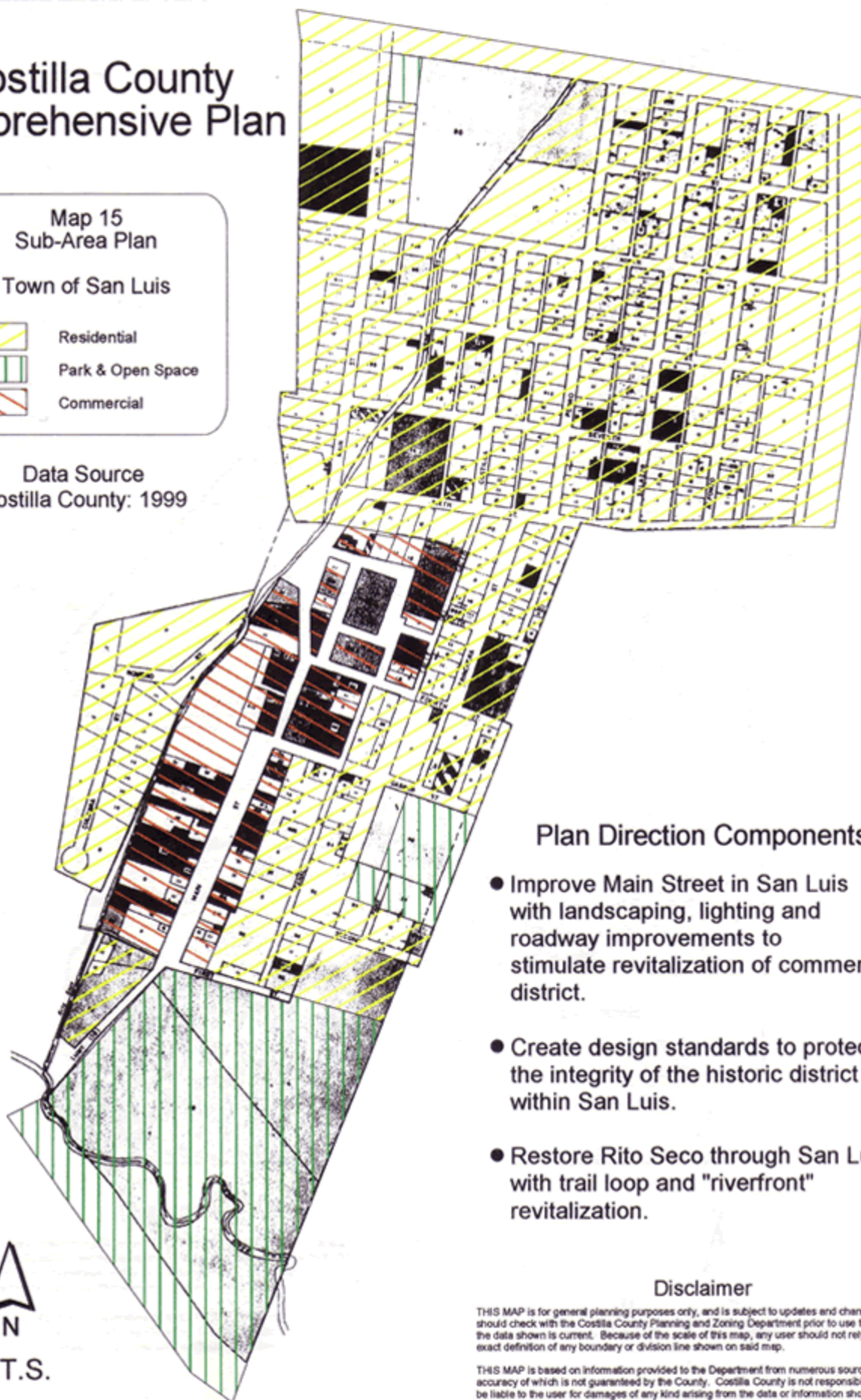
Costilla County Comprehensive Plan

Map 15 Sub-Area Plan

Town of San Luis



Data Source
Costilla County: 1999



Plan Direction Components:

- Improve Main Street in San Luis with landscaping, lighting and roadway improvements to stimulate revitalization of commercial district.
- Create design standards to protect the integrity of the historic district within San Luis.
- Restore Rito Seco through San Luis, with trail loop and "riverfront" revitalization.

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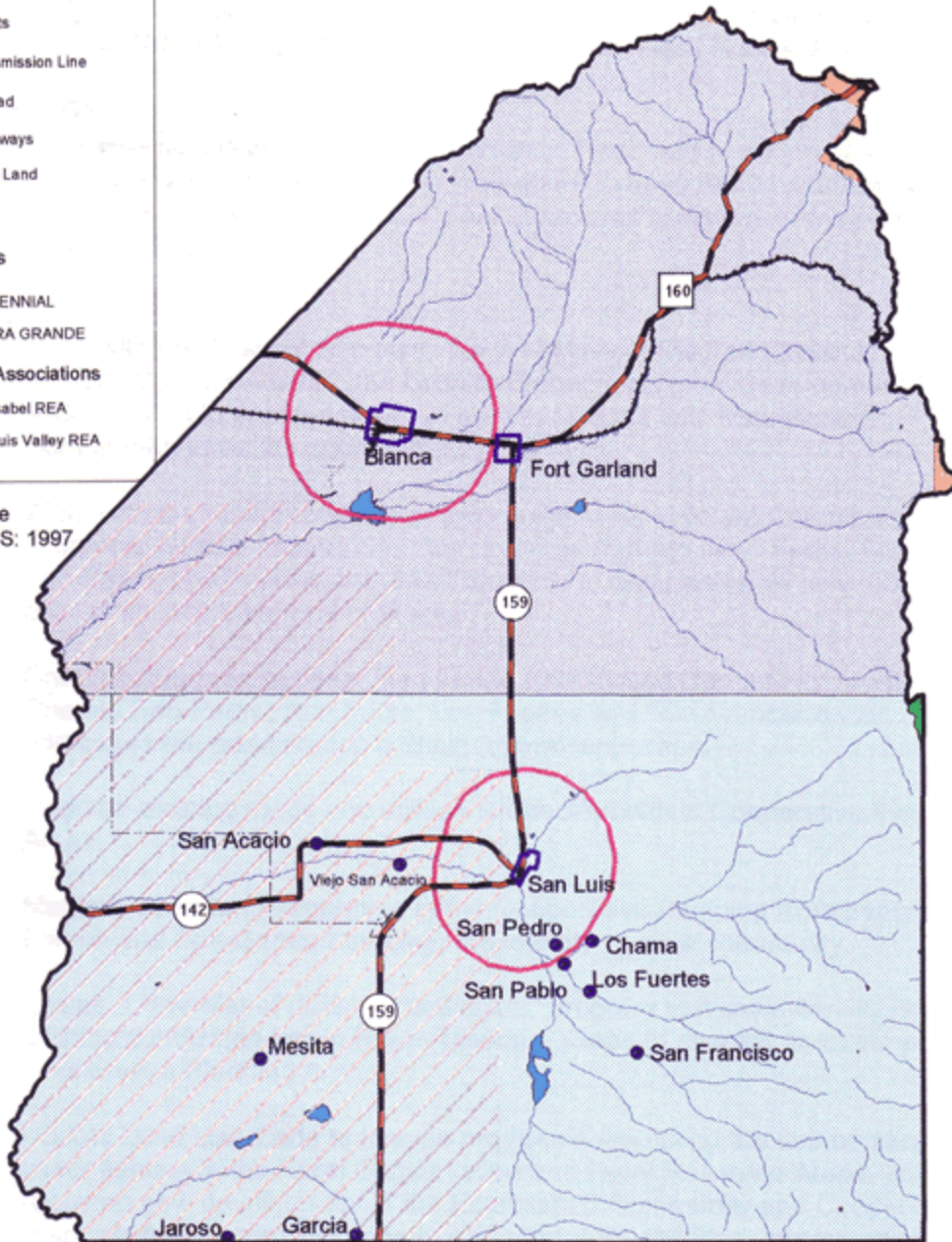
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Map 16 Three Mile Area Plan

-  County Boundary
-  Town Planning Areas
-  Other Towns
-  Highways
-  Three Mile Area
-  Airports
-  Transmission Line
-  Railroad
-  Waterways
-  Public Land
-  Lakes
- School Districts**
-  CENTENNIAL
-  SIERRA GRANDE
- Rural Electric Associations**
-  San Isabel REA
-  San Luis Valley REA

Data Source
Costilla County GIS: 1997

Costilla County Comprehensive Plan



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5 0 5 10 Miles

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Policy GM-03

Rural residential and agricultural development shall be preferred in Rural Resource Areas. Efforts to reduce the platted density within Rural Resource Areas shall be encouraged. Urban levels of development shall be discouraged in Rural Resource Areas.

Policy GM-04

The environmental integrity of Rural Conservation Areas shall be preserved, with most development activity directed away from these areas. Existing platted rural residential subdivisions in Rural Conservation Areas are encouraged to develop with a sensitivity to environmental conditions.

Action(s):

- ❑ Work with the Town of San Luis, Town of Blanca, the Fort Garland Revitalization Committee, the Costilla County Economic Development Office and/or others to encourage urban growth to occur with Established Community Areas, as appropriate.
- ❑ Work with the residents of the unincorporated Established Community Areas of Jarosa, Garcia, Mesita, San Acacio, Viejo San Acacio, Chama, San Pedro, San Pablo, Los Fuertes and San Francisco to ensure that all new growth is consistent with their rural character.
- ❑ Create a sub-area regional plan for the Established Community Areas of Chama, San Pedro, San Pablo, Los Fuertes and San Francisco that addresses the preservation of their cultural landscape.
- ❑ Upgrade existing roads and utilities to direct growth in Cooperative Planning Areas.
- ❑ Maintain open land separation in the Cooperative Planning Area between Blanca and Fort Garland to retain the identity of each community.
- ❑ Create a "transfer of development rights" program that shifts density from existing subdivided lots in Rural Resource Areas to new subdivisions in Cooperative Planning Areas.
- ❑ Update Land Use Code to include provisions restricting the use of mercury vapor lighting in the Rural Conservation and Rural Resource Areas, and requiring new development in the Established Community and Cooperative Planning Areas to install properly designed, fully-shielded, energy-efficient lighting.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Direction: Cooperate on planning activities of mutual concern with the incorporated municipalities of Blanca and San Luis.

Policy GM-05

The County shall coordinate the policies within the Comprehensive Plan with the land use policies and regulations of the towns of Blanca and San Luis.

Action(s):

- ☐ Establish an agreement between Costilla County, San Luis and Blanca to cooperate on land use planning and other matters of mutual regional interest.

Direction: Coordinate the implementation of a Sub-Area Plan for Blanca.

Policy GM-06

The County shall coordinate its planning activities with the Town of Blanca.

Action(s):

- ☐ Work with the Colorado Department of Transportation, Colorado Division of Local Government, Town of Blanca, the Costilla County Economic Development Office, local property owners and/or others to improve US Highway 160 corridor through Blanca with landscaping, lighting and other roadway improvements to stimulate revitalization of commercial district.
- ☐ Target new residential growth to vacant lots in Blanca.
- ☐ Support the Town of Blanca in the pursuit of an Energy Impact Assistance Grant and/or other funding to prepare a comprehensive community plan.
- ☐ Assist the Town of Blanca with the preparation of zoning regulations.

Direction: Coordinate the implementation of a Sub-Area Plan for Fort Garland.

Policy GM-07

The County shall coordinate its planning activities with Fort Garland.

Action(s):

- ☐ Work with the Fort Garland Revitalization Committee, the Costilla County Economic Development Office, local property owners and/or others to improve Fort Garland as a "gateway community" with landscaped entry signage, a visitor's center, pedestrian connections, and other amenities that could attract tourism.
- ☐ Establish separate residential and commercial zoning districts in Fort Garland.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

- Work with the Fort Garland Revitalization Committee, the Costilla County Economic Development Office, local property owners and/or others to explore the issue of Fort Garland incorporating as a local government.

Direction: Coordinate the implementation of a Sub-Area Plan for San Luis.

Policy GM-08

The County shall coordinate its planning activities with the Town of San Luis.

Action(s):

- Work with the Colorado Department of Transportation, Colorado Division of Local Government, Town of San Luis, the Costilla County Economic Development Office, local property owners and/or others to improve Main Street in San Luis with landscaping, lighting and other roadway improvements to stimulate revitalization of commercial district.
- Support the Town of San Luis in the pursuit of an Energy Impact Assistance Grant and/or other funding to prepare a comprehensive community plan.
- Create design standards to protect the integrity of the historic district within San Luis.
- Restore Rito Seco through San Luis, with trail loop and "riverfront" revitalization.